

## SUMMARY

This thesis interrogates the political effects of sustainable development discourse as seen through the lens of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), held in Johannesburg, South Africa. By approaching sustainable development from the perspective of Michel Foucault's work on power, discourse and government, it argues that negotiations at the Summit re-orientated sustainable development in terms of cooperation, consensus and voluntary partnerships. By showing how summits are more than just institutional mechanisms for producing agreement but are also stages on which theatrical and symbolic modes of exemplary politics are performed, the thesis draws attention to how the WSSD functioned as a key technique of exemplary governmentality. Yet the Summit also facilitated the emergence of new constellations of political actors, and provided a stage for myriad political protests and demonstrations. One of these protests – a mass march on 31 August 2002 – was the largest anti-government protest in South Africa since the end of Apartheid. By approaching these protests as Foucauldian 'counter-conducts' rather than 'pure' acts of resistance or revolution, the thesis shows how they were implicated within forms of advanced liberal rule. As such the thesis contributes to a discursive understanding of sustainable development in the post-Johannesburg era; to an appreciation of the evolving role of global summits as forms of theatrical exemplary government; and to the political effects of resistance and protest. It concludes that the WSSD worked to make politically sustainable a global order which is manifestly unsustainable – whilst also providing opportunities for the *status quo* to be protested and resisted.

# *One World Comes to One Country?*

*Governing Sustainable Development  
from the Johannesburg Summit*

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# *Abbreviations*

ANC	African National Congress
BASD	Business Action for Sustainable Development
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CSD	UN Commission for Sustainable Development
CUP	Cambridge University Press
DEAT	Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism
DESA	UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DWAF	Department of Water and Forestry
EJNF	Environmental Justice Networking Forum
EMG	Environmental Monitoring Group
EU	European Union
EWT	Endangered Wildlife Trust
G7	Group of 7 (now G8)
G77	Group of 77 (plus China)
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Re-distribution programme
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GEM	Group for Environmental Monitoring
GPPi	Global Public Policy Institute
ICLEI	Local Governments for Sustainability
IGOs	Inter-Governmental Organisations
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IUCN	World Conservation Union
IUCN-SA	World Conservation Union-South Africa
JCL	Johannesburg Climate Legacy
JOWSCO	Johannesburg World Summit Company
JUSCANZ	Japan, United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand
MDG(s)	Millennium Development Goal(s)
NEPAD	New Economic Plan for African Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPT	Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OUP	Oxford University Press
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Plan
RDSN	Rural Development Services Network
RECIEL	Review of European Community International Environmental Law
RIIA	Royal Institute of International Affairs
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SACP	South African Communist Party
SAIIA	South African Institute of International Affairs
SAIS	School of Advanced International Studies
SANCO	South African National Civics Organisation
SANGOCO	South African Non-Governmental Organisation Coalition

SECC	Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee
SMI	Social Movements Indaba
TNCs	Trans-National Corporations
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCED	UN Conference on Environment and Development
UNCHE	UN Conference on the Human Environment
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UNESCO	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNGASS	UN General Assembly Special Session (Rio+5 Summit)
UNUP	UN University Press
US	United States
WBCSD	World Business Council for Sustainable Development
WCAR	World Conference Against Racism
WEDO	Women's Environment and Development Organisation
WESSA	Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa
WRI	World Resources Institute
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WTO	World Trade Organisation
WWF	Worldwide Fund for Nature/World Wildlife Fund
WWF-SA	Worldwide Fund for Nature-South Africa

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*The highest parts of the loftiest peaks seem to be above the laws that rule our world below, as if they belonged to another sphere.*

Conrad Gesner, 1541 <sup>1</sup>

*There is nothing more difficult to execute, nor more dubious of success, nor more dangerous to administer than to introduce a new order of things.*

Niccolò Machiavelli, 1532 <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> C. Gesner, Swiss naturalist and bibliographer, quoted in R. Macfarlane, *Mountains of the Mind: A History of a Fascination*, (London; Granta Books, 2003), p. 201.

<sup>2</sup> N. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, (tr. P. Bondanella), (Oxford; OUP, 1984), p. 21.

# Introduction

*In the last thirty years the torch of sustainable development has travelled from Europe to the Americas, and through Asia and it now burns in Africa. After a protracted journey, it now arrives in a continent that is the cradle of humanity. The fact that we have convened at this cradle of humanity emphasizes the obligation we all face to respond with all seriousness and urgency and to adopt a meaningful Johannesburg plan of implementation, in the interests of all humanity and our common planet.*

***Thabo Mbeki, Johannesburg 2002***<sup>1</sup>

With these words South African President Thabo Mbeki opened the 2002 United Nations (UN) World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), welcoming the assembled global community to the pinnacle of global politics. By invoking the image of the ‘torch of sustainable development’ coming to banish the darkness and give hope of a shared and sustainable future he reminded his audience of their common origin in the Cradle of Humankind caves, located just outside Johannesburg. The task of the WSSD, however, was to agree on a common future – a plan of action for our “global village”, since “the survival of everybody in this village demands that we develop a universal consensus to act together.”<sup>2</sup> The common origins and common future of the human race were thus recurring themes at the WSSD, as part of a broader emphasis upon partnership, solidarity and consensus.

Between 26 August and 4 September the WSSD brought together world leaders, UN luminaries and bureaucrats, scientists, activists, lobbyists, the press and technical advisors in order “to reinvigorate the global commitment to sustainable development.”<sup>3</sup> Scattered in and around the central conference venue at Sandton in tents, halls, hotels, exhibition centres and a cricket ground it felt as though the global

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<sup>1</sup> Thabo Mbeki’s opening statement to the WSSD, in UN, *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August – 4 September 2002*, (New York; UN, 2002), p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 156.

<sup>3</sup> UN, *Resolution 55/199: Ten-year review of progress achieved in the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, 20/12/2000*, (New York; UN, 2000), #1.



community was assembled in miniature, ready to take on the task of securing the broader planetary community as well as safeguarding the future of unborn generations. The sense of drama, of standing on a world stage at a pivotal moment in time, was heightened by the awareness that the hosts had not even been present at the Rio Summit in 1992. The overthrow of the Apartheid regime and the emergence of an apparently unified and peaceful ‘Rainbow Nation’ from the ruins of the old South Africa was regarded as an auspicious sign for the potential for the global community to put aside their differences and cooperate in striving for a new political order. For ten days in Johannesburg, one could be forgiven for feeling that ‘one world had come to one country’, and that a new and united world order could emerge, inspired by the South African example.<sup>4</sup>



This thesis is an investigation into the politics of sustainable development at the WSSD, and a critical interrogation of the claims of global unity, consensus and partnership that characterised it. It is motivated by a desire to understand how sustainable development fits into global power relationships: to what degree is it a force for reform, revolution, or stabilisation of the status quo? Has the counter-cultural environmental movement been co-opted into a pacified discourse of sustainable development, or are there still spaces for resistance and progressive politics in sites such as the WSSD? The varied and heterogeneous dimensions of the Johannesburg Summit are used as lenses for the analysis of the broader politics of sustainable development. The research question which drives this thesis is therefore: what were the political effects of the Summit and the way it constructed sustainable development?

In answering this question a theoretical perspective inspired by Michel Foucault is adopted in order to show how sustainable development constitutes a discourse which establishes particular relationships of power and knowledge. Many contemporary treatments of the concept of sustainable development are deeply unsatisfying, treating it either as an unproblematic universal goal or public good

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<sup>4</sup> The phrase ‘one world comes to one country’ has been adapted from V. Munnik and J. Wilson, *The World Comes to One Country: An Insider History of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg 2002*, (Johannesburg; Heinrich Böll Foundation, 2003).

behind which everyone can unite, or alternatively as a cynical rhetorical device for legitimising continued inequitable and ecologically damaging economic development. A Foucauldian perspective seeks to avoid these twin traps of apparent neutrality and mystifying ideology, instead approaching sustainable development as an assemblage of practices of government which produces its own particular ways of seeing, knowing, acting and being. The discourse of sustainable development governs global politics in certain ways, through techniques and sites such as the WSSD, and this thesis is directed at highlighting how, and with what effects, this is achieved and resisted.



The focus on the WSSD is part necessity and part a reflection of the way in which UN summits stand as landmark moments within the discourse. Since it was popularised in the 1987 report of the Brundtland Commission, *Our Common Future*, and elaborated at the Rio Earth Summit and *Agenda 21*, the concept of sustainable development has produced a forest of texts, commentaries, institutions, programmes, policies, strategies, scientific investigations and technical projects. It would be impossible to adequately cover the entire scope of sustainable development in all its manifestations, so this research uses the WSSD as a lens through which to examine the broader discourse.<sup>5</sup> Within this discourse UN summits have been constructed as authoritative and epoch-defining moments at which sustainable development is produced, manifested and renewed. The WSSD was a continuation of the process that began at the Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) in Stockholm in 1972, and continued with the Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) – also known as the ‘Earth Summit’ – in Rio in 1992, and the General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) in New York in 1997, also known as ‘Rio+5’ or Earth Summit II. Johannesburg in 2002 was therefore a key moment for re-defining the place and role of sustainable development in the early twenty-first century. Following

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<sup>5</sup> There are, of course, many ways of examining the politics of sustainable development other than through UN summits, and as Mark Whitehead notes, “actually existing sustainabilities do not simply represent local manifestations of UN-sanctioned models of sustainable development – nor should they.” M. Whitehead, *Spaces of Sustainability: Geographical Perspectives on the Sustainable Society*, (London; Routledge, 2007), p. 212.

Paul Wapner, we can use the WSSD “as a benchmark for gauging the character of world environmental affairs.”<sup>6</sup>

As well as its usefulness as a lens through which to examine sustainable development, the WSSD merits detailed analysis as a historical event in its own right. Whilst a number of academic studies have discussed certain dimensions of the WSSD, this thesis provides a sustained, critical and theoretically informed account of its political significance. In particular it brings together discussions on three dimensions of the Summit. First, the Summit stands as a conventionally important ‘high’ political moment; secondly it represents a significant landmark in the evolution of summitry as a form of global governance; and thirdly it was a potential turning-point in the politics of post-Apartheid South Africa.

The WSSD was the largest ever UN conference and plausibly the largest ever political meeting in world history, at least in terms of the number of states represented. One recent collection describes it as “an event of great significance with global ramifications.”<sup>7</sup> Representatives of over 190 countries, 100 world leaders and about 22,000 other participants attended the main conference, whilst a further 15,000 attended one or more of the many side-events.<sup>8</sup> South African sources claim as many as 80,000 people attended the Summit.<sup>9</sup> The official history of the politics and negotiations at the WSSD, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, by Pamela Chasek and Richard Sherman stands out as a comprehensive and balanced account.<sup>10</sup> A more critical assessment is provided by Neil Middleton and Phil O’Keefe in *Rio Plus Ten*.<sup>11</sup> Both publications discussed the significance of the Summit debates and their impact on the broader discourse of sustainable development in the immediate aftermath of the Summit.

Yet the WSSD came at the end of one of the busiest periods of summits in world history, and at a time when their value was increasingly being questioned. The

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<sup>6</sup> P. Wapner, ‘World Summit on Sustainable Development: Toward a Post-Jo’burg Environmentalism’, *Global Environmental Politics*, 3, 1, (2003), p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> A. C. Kalhauge, E. Correll and G. Sjöstedt, ‘The Multilateral Process for Sustainable Development: Past, Present and Future’, in A. C. Kalhauge, G. Sjöstedt and E. Correll (eds.), *Global Challenges: Furthering the Multilateral Process for Sustainable Development*, (Sheffield; Greenleaf, 2005), p. 16.

<sup>8</sup> P. Chasek and R. Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg: A Negotiation of Hope*, (Pretoria; DEAT and UNDP, 2004), p. 117.

<sup>9</sup> JOWSCO, *Report of the Economic Impact of the World Summit on Sustainable Development on South Africa*, (Johannesburg; JOWSCO, no date), pp. 20 – 21.

<sup>10</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*.

<sup>11</sup> N. Middleton and P. O’Keefe, *Rio Plus Ten: Politics, Poverty and the Environment*, (London; Pluto Press, 2003).

general feelings of “summit fatigue” at the WSSD have given way to more profound doubts about their function in global politics, such that in 2004 the UN Cardoso report pronounced that “the era of global conferences is largely over.”<sup>12</sup> In June 2003 “the UN General Assembly voted to end what had become a practice of automatic five-year reviews of UN conferences”, and the absence of a ‘WSSD+5’ anniversary conference in 2007 seemed to confirm this ebbing of enthusiasm for multilateral summits.<sup>13</sup> Whilst many authors have discussed these developments, few have given explicit and sustained attention to the impact and politics of the WSSD itself, as well as its effects on broader patterns of global governance.<sup>14</sup>

The WSSD was also significant because it marked an apparent turning-point in South African politics. The Summit was marked by heightened tension both within the ruling Alliance and between the state and civil society, and on 31 August the largest anti-government protest in the post-Apartheid era marched in Johannesburg.<sup>15</sup> Such protests have become an inescapable accompaniment to global summits, and those of the WSSD have acquired a landmark status for South African politics. The tensions during the Summit build-up and the marches themselves have been excellently discussed by Victor Munnik and Jessica Wilson in their report *The World Comes to One Country*, which also provides an insider’s perspective on the UN negotiations.<sup>16</sup>

This thesis builds on these existing accounts of the WSSD, whilst illuminating new and alternative aspects through a Foucauldian perspective on the politics of sustainable development, the nature of summitry and global governance, and the

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<sup>12</sup> F. Cardoso, *We the peoples: Civil Society, the United Nations and Global Governance: Report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations–Civil Society Relations*, (New York; UN, 2004), p. 71. See also Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 163; G. Seyfang and A. Jordan, ‘The Johannesburg Summit and Sustainable Development: How Effective are Environmental Mega-Conferences?’, in O. S. Stokke and O. B. Thommessen (eds.), *Yearbook of International Cooperation on Environment and Development 2002/2003*, (London; Earthscan, 2002), pp. 19 – 26; Wapner, ‘World Summit on Sustainable Development’, p. 2; and J. M. Witte, C. Streck and T. Benner, (eds.), *Progress or Peril? Partnerships and Networks in Global Environmental Governance: The Post-Johannesburg Agenda*, (Washington DC; GPPi, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> M. G. Schechter, *United Nations Global Conferences*, (London; Routledge, 2005), p. 11; C. Death, ‘No WSSD + 5? Global Environmental Diplomacy in the twenty-first century’, *Environmental Politics*, 17, 1, (2008), pp. 121 – 125.

<sup>14</sup> An exception is J. Martens, *The Future of Multilateralism after Monterrey and Johannesburg*, (Berlin; Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2003); and J. Martens, *Multistakeholder Partnerships – the Future of Multilateralism?*, (Berlin; Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2007). See also Schechter, *United Nations Global Conferences*, pp. 187 – 194.

<sup>15</sup> P. Bond, *Unsustainable South Africa: Environment, Development and Social Protest*, (London; Merlin Press, 2002), chapter 7; P. Bond, *Talk Left, Walk Right: South Africa’s Frustrated Global Reforms*, (Pietermaritzburg; UKZN Press, 2006).

<sup>16</sup> Munnik and Wilson, *The World Comes to One Country*.

relationship between protests, resistance and power. In particular, by drawing upon the Foucauldian notion of “governmentality” it shows how power at the WSSD operated not only as a capacity exercised by one actor over another, but also through techniques of “rule at a distance” in which the scope, forms and identities of governmental action – conceived as “the conduct of conduct” – were determined.<sup>17</sup> A governmentality perspective questions many of the binary divisions on which conventional political thought has been based: international and domestic, power and resistance, government and freedom, public and private, and state and civil society. It draws attention to the multiplicity of ways in which rule is exercised through a heterogeneous assemblage of sites and actors, incorporating but going far beyond the traditional limits of the state, through which the conduct of free, rational and responsible actors is channelled and guided. The contribution of this thesis is therefore to provide a Foucauldian governmentality perspective on the politics of the WSSD in three areas: as a moment of ‘high politics’ in which the discourse of sustainable development was defined and shaped; as a technique of global government highlighting evolutions in the role of summitry; and as a site of resistance and political protest which had particular political effects in South Africa.

Such a perspective acknowledges, but differs from, the ways in which global summits have conventionally been studied in the social and political sciences. A number of prevailing perspectives have shaped how summits are viewed as political events. What might be called the liberal institutionalist perspective asserts that they “simply provide multilateral fora to coordinate efforts for solutions” to self-evident problems such as underdevelopment or environmental degradation.<sup>18</sup> For Peter Haas, for example, summits’ outputs are part and parcel of a “broader process of multilateral governance and may contribute to stronger and more effective environmental

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<sup>17</sup> M. Foucault, ‘Governmentality’, in *Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954 – 1984*, Vol. 3, (ed. J. D. Faubian, tr. R. Hurley), (New York; The New Press, 2000), pp. 201 – 222. See also M. Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*, (London; Sage, 1999); C. Gordon, ‘Governmental Rationality: An Introduction’, in G. Burchell, C. Gordon and P. Miller (eds.), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, (Chicago; University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 1 – 51; N. Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought*, (Cambridge; CUP, 1999); and N. Rose and P. Miller, ‘Political Power beyond the State: Problematics of Government’, *The British Journal Of Sociology*, 43, 2, (1992), pp. 173 – 205.

<sup>18</sup> M.-C. C. Segger, A. Khalfan, M. Gehring and M. Toering, ‘Prospects for Principles of International Sustainable Development Law after the WSSD: Common but Differentiated Responsibilities, Precaution and Participation’, *RECIEL*, 12, 1, (2003), p. 67. See also P. S. Chasek, *Earth Negotiations: Analyzing Thirty Years of Environmental Diplomacy*, (Tokyo; UNUP, 2001); Kalhauge *et al*, *Global Challenges*; and Schechter, *United Nations Global Conferences*.

governance by states.”<sup>19</sup> James Meadowcroft argues that the Rio Summit “contributed to altering the perception of development and environmental issues” as well as giving “rise to institutional reform and adjustment.”<sup>20</sup> In contrast a Foucauldian perspective draws attention to the ways in which regimes of power/knowledge are deeply implicated in the framing of particular problems, and in the authorities, techniques, institutions and actors which are established as necessary for their solutions. Whilst problem-solving approaches to sustainable development and global governance are important and necessary, this thesis emphasises the fact that summits are not neutral tools for solving self-evident problems but are rather bound up with the production and re-production of global power relations.

Another angle on summitry is provided by what can be termed the liberal cosmopolitan perspective, from which it is argued that whilst summits may be weak institutional mechanisms for solving problems, they represent a political ‘good’ which should be promoted, such as the democratisation of global politics.<sup>21</sup> Thus Jacques Fomerand points out that whilst the texts produced have no formal coercive power, summits are “not meant to be arenas for making authoritative decisions” but rather perform the function of “collective legitimisation.”<sup>22</sup> From this perspective summits have “facilitated the emergence of a global civil society”, and provided “an arena where people can express themselves freely, organise associations, and try to influence decision-makers.”<sup>23</sup> Whilst not denying the importance of opening up spaces in which more democratic forms of politics can take place, a Foucauldian perspective cautions that even civil society spaces are not free from power relations, and indeed modern techniques of advanced liberal rule work precisely through the creation of certain expectations of the correct standards and codes of conduct for ‘civilised’ and responsible actors. Furthermore, the assumption that the state and civil society are separate spheres of life is one that unduly constricts our views of what politics and resistance are, and where they can be located. Foucault urged that “we

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<sup>19</sup> P. M. Haas, ‘UN Conferences and Constructivist Governance of the Environment’, *Global Governance*, 8, (2002), p. 74.

<sup>20</sup> J. Meadowcroft, ‘Taking Issue with UNCED’s Critics’, *New Political Economy*, 1, (1996), pp. 408 – 412.

<sup>21</sup> Schechter, *United Nations Global Conferences*, p. 16.

<sup>22</sup> J. Fomerand, ‘UN Conferences: Media Events or Genuine Diplomacy?’, *Global Governance*, 2, (1996), p. 371.

<sup>23</sup> M. Pianta, *UN World Summits and Civil Society: The State of the Art*, (Geneva; UNRISD, 2005), p. 1; and M. Kaldor, H. Anheier and M. Glasius, ‘Introduction’, in H. Anheier, M. Glasius, and M. Kaldor (eds.), *Global Civil Society 2004/5*, (London; Sage, 2005), p. 13.

must resist the division of labour so often proposed to us: individuals can get indignant and talk; governments will reflect and act.”<sup>24</sup>

Realist and historical perspectives have also drawn attention to the centrality of power in international politics, and have provided valuable analytical tools for analysing negotiations between competing delegations at summits.<sup>25</sup> This rationale underpins the approach of many negotiators, diplomats and politicians, whose attention is focussed on the power struggles within and between state representatives. Thus, according to former British diplomat Tony Brenton, whilst non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can act as lobbyists and interested parties the “centres of decision remain in national capitals.”<sup>26</sup> Such a perspective tends to represent summit outcomes in terms of victories for particular national or regional interests, such as ‘the North’ or ‘the South’.<sup>27</sup> In contrast a Foucauldian perspective adopts a broader understanding of power as going beyond state-centric, material and sovereign forms, drawing attention to the pervasiveness of power relations in the very constitution of states, knowledge, experts and authority in global politics. Categories such as ‘North’ and ‘South’ which have dominated accounts of environment and development conferences are shown to be particular discursive constructions with particular effects, rather than objectively existing entities with pre-discursive interests.

A more critical perspective on summitry is provided by Marxist-influenced political economy accounts. From such positions summits are regarded as structures (or super-structures) which cement dominant political and economic interests through ideological and rhetorical means, creating legitimacy and consent through their nod to environmental and development concerns, but doing little to change the material

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<sup>24</sup> M. Foucault, ‘Confronting Governments: Human Rights’, in *Power*, p. 475.

<sup>25</sup> G. R. Berridge, *Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*, (Basingstoke; Palgrave, 2005), chapter 11; D. H. Dunn, *The Lure of Summitry: International Dialogue at the Highest Level*, (Leicester; Centre for the Study of Diplomacy, 1996); D. H. Dunn, ‘What is Summitry?’ in D. H. Dunn (ed.), *Diplomacy at the Highest Level: The Evolution of International Summitry*, (Basingstoke; Macmillan, 1996), pp. 3 – 22; J. Kaufmann, *Conference Diplomacy: An Introductory Analysis*, (Dordrecht; Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1988); R. D. Putnam, ‘Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games’, *International Organization*, 42, 3, (1988), pp. 427 – 460; D. Reynolds, *Summits: Six Meetings that Shaped the Twentieth Century*, (London; Allen Lane, 2007).

<sup>26</sup> T. Brenton, *The Greening of Machiavelli: The Evolution of International Environmental Politics*, (London; RIIA and Earthscan, 1994), p. 8.

<sup>27</sup> A. Najam, ‘Developing Countries and Global Environmental Governance: From Contestation to Participation to Engagement’, *International Environmental Agreements*, 5, (2005), pp. 303 – 321; A. Schroeder, *Rio to Jo’burg and Beyond: The World Summit on Sustainable Development*, South African Institute International Affairs Report #25, (Johannesburg; SAIIA, 2002).

balance of power.<sup>28</sup> For example, Chatterjee and Finger argued that in 1992 “UNCED has co-opted some, divided and destroyed others, and promoted the ones who had the money to take advantage of this combined public relations and lobbying exercise.”<sup>29</sup> In a similar vein, Patrick Bond’s conclusion on the WSSD is that it “will be remembered, at best, as just another site for UN blahblah, and at worst, as the amplification of corporate control over both nature and everyday life.”<sup>30</sup> Feminist and political ecology critiques have extended this argument, showing how hegemonic forms of power and knowledge bound up in UN summits work to suppress women and nature as well as the poor.<sup>31</sup> Such perspectives have been invaluable in highlighting the centrality of power and ideology in global politics, and in focusing on the effects of seemingly neutral institutions and discourses. Whilst drawing closely on their insights however, a Foucauldian perspective conceptualises the relationship between power and resistance somewhat differently. Whereas these critical accounts oppose hegemonic (and often, in the last instance, material) forms of power to the possibility of liberation or emancipation through revolutionary resistance, Foucault was sceptical of this possibility. He argued that “I do not think it is possible to say that one thing is of the order of ‘liberation’ and another is of the order of oppression.”<sup>32</sup> This is not to doubt the possibility – even necessity – of resistance and struggle, but rather to doubt the ontological possibility of a fundamentally liberated or unencumbered human subject. Indeed the free individual subject at the heart of these notions of emancipation and liberation is itself a product of techniques of advanced liberal government. Providing a Foucauldian perspective on the WSSD thus resists interpreting it in terms of dominating global elites suppressing enlightened grassroots resistance movements, but rather shows how practices of government and protest intersect and overlap in the constitution of global power relations.

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<sup>28</sup> Bond, *Unsustainable South Africa*; Middleton and O’Keefe, *Rio Plus Ten*; M. Paterson, ‘UNCED in the Context of Globalisation’, *New Political Economy*, 1, (1996), pp. 401 – 404; C. Thomas, ‘Unsustainable Development?’, *New Political Economy*, 1, (1996), pp. 404 – 408.

<sup>29</sup> P. Chatterjee and M. Finger, *The Earth Brokers: Power, Politics and World Development*, (London; Routledge, 1994), p. 173.

<sup>30</sup> Bond, *Unsustainable South Africa*, p. 382.

<sup>31</sup> P. Doran, ‘Earth, power, knowledge: towards a critical global environmental politics’, in J. Macmillan and A. Linklater (ed.), *Boundaries in Question: New Directions in International Relations*, (London; Pinter, 1995), pp. 193 – 211; P. Doran, ‘“The Earth Summit” (UNCED) Ecology as Spectacle’, *Paradigms*, 7, 1, (1993), pp. 55 – 65; M. Mies and V. Shiva (eds.), *Ecofeminism*, (London; Zed Books, 1993); W. Sachs (ed.), *Global Ecology: A New Arena of Political Conflict*, (London; Zed Books, 1993); W. Sachs, *Planet Dialectics: Explorations in Environment and Development*, (London; Zed Books, 1999).

<sup>32</sup> M. Foucault, ‘Space, Knowledge and Power’, in *Power*, p. 354.



While there is therefore much of value in these intellectual traditions of approaching sustainable development and summitry, this thesis argues that they are rooted in particular understandings of power, resistance and politics, with the result that certain aspects, dimensions and effects are emphasised and others missed. Whilst a Foucauldian approach also inevitably has its biases and omissions, it is shown to cast an original and perceptive light on moments like the WSSD, and has much to contribute to our understanding of the political effects of the discourse of sustainable development.

### ***Sources and Interviews***

A Foucauldian approach does not preclude the utilisation of other methodologies and tools since, as Foucault noted, discourse “is so complex a reality that we not only can but should approach it at different levels and with different methods.”<sup>33</sup> The thesis therefore draws on the existing secondary literature on the WSSD which, as well as the books by Chasek and Sherman, Middleton and O’Keefe, and Munnik and Wilson, includes a number of academic articles.<sup>34</sup> This secondary literature is supplemented by analysis of both familiar and new primary material – reports, statements, speeches, legal texts, position papers, policy documents, pamphlets, media coverage, published interviews, websites and reviews – and a large

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<sup>33</sup> M. Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, (London; Tavistock/Routledge, 1974), p. xiv.

<sup>34</sup> Key chapters and articles include T. Bigg, ‘The World Summit on Sustainable Development: Was it Worthwhile?’ in T. Bigg (ed.), *Survival For a Small Planet: The Sustainable Development Agenda*, (London; Earthscan, 2004), pp. 1 – 22; J. Burg, ‘The World Summit on Sustainable Development: Empty Talk or Call to Action?’, *Journal of Environment and Development*, 12, 1, (2003), pp. 111 – 120; P. Gutman, ‘What did WSSD Accomplish? An NGO Perspective’, *Environment*, 45, 2, (2003), pp. 20 – 28; A. G. M. La Viña, G. Hoff, and A. M. DeRose, ‘The Outcomes of Johannesburg: Assessing the World Summit on Sustainable Development’, *SAIS Review*, 23, 1, (2003), pp. 53 – 70; S. Mehta, ‘The Johannesburg Summit from the Depths’, *Journal of Environment and Development*, 12, 1, (2003), pp. 121 – 128; F. X. Perez, ‘The World Summit on Sustainable Development: Environment, Precaution and Trade – A Potential for Success and/or Failure’, *RECIEL*, 12, 1, (2003), pp. 12 – 22; J. G. Speth, ‘Perspectives on the Johannesburg Summit’, *Environment*, 45, 1, (2003), pp. 25 – 29; M. Steiner, ‘NGO Reflections on the World Summit: Rio + 10 or Rio – 10?’, *RECIEL*, 12, 1, (2003), pp. 33 – 38; I. Von Frantzius, ‘World Summit on Sustainable Development Johannesburg 2002: A Critical Analysis and Assessment of the Outcomes’, *Environmental Politics*, 13, 2, (2004), pp. 467 – 473; and Wapner, ‘World Summit on Sustainable Development’.

number of semi-structured interviews. This new material is an important dimension of the thesis' originality.

The analysis of sustainable development is based on a number of key primary texts including the 1987 Brundtland Report, *Our Common Future*; the World Conservation Union (IUCN), UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Worldwide Fund for Nature's (WWF) 1991 publication *Caring for the Earth*; and the outcomes of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, *Agenda 21* and the Rio Declaration.<sup>35</sup> These texts have been chosen because of their authoritative and foundational status, and the frequency to which they are referred within the discourse. The analysis of the WSSD draws on the extensive documentary output produced throughout the Summit process, including official UN records of proceedings from Johannesburg and the preparatory meetings in Bali and New York, the outcome texts, speeches delivered by delegations and accredited groups and the record of negotiations provided by the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*. The competing discourses at the WSSD are charted through these documents and position papers such as the Danish and South African proposals for a new Global Deal.<sup>36</sup> Prominent partnerships such as the Johannesburg Climate Legacy were analysed through promotional material and the online UN database.<sup>37</sup> These documents were selected for their influence and prominence at the Summit, as well as the coherence of their visions for how sustainable development should be governed and implemented. The analysis of the protests in Johannesburg tended to rely less upon published texts given the often transitory and oppositional nature of the demonstrations, analysing instead film footage, media reports, pamphlets, images and unpublished minutes. Documents available on the internet are indicated in the bibliography, and some unpublished material was obtained from the South African History Archive in Johannesburg and private collections. In order to maximise both the depth and breadth of the analysis, the conduct of a range of global and local organisations who protested at the Summit was included, such as Greenpeace, WWF,

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<sup>35</sup> G. H. Brundtland, *Our Common Future: World Commission on Environment and Development*, (Oxford; OUP, 1987); IUCN, UNEP and WWF, *Caring for the Earth: A Strategy for Sustainable Living*, (Gland; IUCN, UNEP, and WWF, 1991); UN, *Agenda 21*, (Rio; UN, 1992); UN, *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*, (Rio; UN, 1992).

<sup>36</sup> Denmark, *Non-paper: World Summit on Sustainable Development – 'A Global Deal'*, (Denmark, 2001); South Africa, *From Rio to Johannesburg: a Global Deal for the further implementation of Agenda 21 towards sustainable development*, (2002); and DEAT, *People, Planet, Prosperity: Towards a New Global Deal*, (Pretoria; DEAT, 2002).

<sup>37</sup> Future Forests, *Greening the WSSD: The Johannesburg Climate Legacy: Executive Summary and Call to Action*, (June 2002); Johannesburg Climate Legacy (JCL) Partnership, <http://webapps01.un.org/dsd/partnerships/public/partnerships/15.html>

Friends of the Earth, the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA), the Environmental Justice Networking Forum (EJNF), GroundWork, Earthlife Africa, the Social Movements Indaba, the Anti-Privatisation Forum and the Landless People's Movement.

This documentary material was supplemented by 50 semi-structured interviews conducted in the UK, South Africa and New York, listed in appendix A. From August 2006 to January 2007 research was conducted in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban, including participant and non-participant observation, small group discussions and semi-structured interviews.<sup>38</sup> Interviews with UN personnel involved in organising the Summit took place in New York in October 2007. A small number of phone and email interviews were also conducted. These were elite interviews (rather than a representative sample), selected on the basis of participating in the Summit preparations, organisation, negotiations, lobbying and/or protests. Interviewees included activists, academics, organisers within the UN and the South African Government, members of state delegations and negotiators, politicians, trade unionists, professionals within the environmental sector and NGOs. Whilst further interviews would have doubtlessly contributed fresh perspectives, fifty interviews were sufficient to provide a broad and diverse range of details, anecdotes and reflections. Given the time and space limitations of the research, the law of diminishing returns was applied to the interview process.

Interviews were structured around a prepared list of questions and topics, designed around the specific area of expertise and experience of the interviewee. These accordingly varied from interview to interview, but included common questions such as 'What was the most important legacy of the WSSD, in your opinion?', and 'What is your view of the concept of and prospects for sustainable development?' Interviews were recorded where the interviewee consented, and transcripts were prepared from these recordings or from interview notes. The transcripts were communicated to interviewees for their comments and clarifications. This research is indebted to the openness and frankness of the majority of my interviewees, and the ethical implications of this fieldwork were a constant subject of

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<sup>38</sup> Preparation for this research included undertaking an Advanced Qualitative Investigation Package on analysing interviews in Aberystwyth. Methodological reflections on interviewing were obtained from A. Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, (Oxford; OUP, 2001); and U. Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, (London; Sage, 2002).

reflection and consideration.<sup>39</sup> The variety of interviewees and the triangulation of their accounts with primary and secondary sources have enabled their inevitably partial and historically distanced memories of the WSSD to be placed in context. The manner in which these accounts have brought to life the often dry official records of the Summit was invaluable, especially for a researcher who was not present in Johannesburg in 2002.

### *Structure of the thesis*

The thesis is divided into five chapters. The first sets out the theoretical approach and the second accounts for the production of sustainable development from Stockholm to Johannesburg, whilst chapters three, four and five focus on the WSSD itself. Chapter one argues that a Foucauldian perspective on power/knowledge, discourse and governmentality entails rethinking some of the binaries that have structured conventional political thought: state and civil society, the international and the domestic, and power and resistance. It maps out how discourses such as sustainable development establish certain views of ‘a problem’ and authorise certain actors, techniques and systems of truth as solutions. Drawing on Mitchell Dean’s “analytics of government” it establishes a framework for analysing and comparing rationalities of government based on the fields of visibility they open up, the regimes of knowledge they invoke, the techniques they mobilise and the forms of subjectivity and identity they produce.<sup>40</sup> In response to claims that Foucauldian discourse theory lacks a consciously articulated ethical perspective, chapter one argues that a governmentality approach explicitly entails an ethical attitude of criticism and politicisation. This is a stance of aiming “to enhance the contestability of regimes of authority that seek to govern us in the name of our own good.”<sup>41</sup>

Chapter two argues that sustainable development can be understood as a Foucauldian discourse, manifested in texts such as the Brundtland Report and *Agenda*

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<sup>39</sup> Such considerations came explicitly to the fore during the SMI Annual Meeting at UKZN, from 2-6 December 2006, for example. Here questions about the roles and responsibilities of academics linked to the social movements’ struggles became the subject of fierce debate.

<sup>40</sup> Dean, *Governmentality*, p. 20.

<sup>41</sup> Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, p. 60.

21 and at moments such as the Stockholm and Rio conferences. It argues that interpreting sustainable development as a discourse, rather than as a precise concept or mystifying ideology, shows how it makes some things visible and others invisible, and how it empowers certain experts and forms of truth, mobilises concrete practices and techniques and produces particular authoritative actors and subjects. Whilst it is a discourse with many different articulations and internal tensions, what unites these different visions of sustainable development is that they have a common rationality of government – they all attempt to ensure the proper conduct necessary to secure a sustainable future. Rather than explicitly chart the evolution of the concept, this chapter shows how eco-governmentality analyses have highlighted the disciplinary and bio-political continuities within the discourse.<sup>42</sup> Building on these approaches chapter two argues that sustainable development also entails productive, subject-creating and politically ambiguous power relations, and points towards how such perspectives could be extended in the light of the WSSD.

Chapter three turns to the Johannesburg Summit, and argues that the negotiations can be understood as contests between competing rationalities of government: the disciplinary and bio-political visions of government embodied in proposals for a new Global Deal, and the advanced liberal governmentality of the Type II voluntary partnership approach. More than simply disagreements over forms of implementation, these approaches rested upon fundamentally different attitudes toward the purposes, means and ends of government. The eventual Summit outcomes were clearly weighted toward an advanced liberal rationality of government which relied upon the voluntary and responsible conduct of self-selecting partners operating at a distance from traditional centres of power. This framing produced particular political effects, such as focussing sustainable development on a narrow and de-contextualised vision of poverty eradication and on successful partnerships rather than broader structural issues, the prioritisation of scientific and technical forms of knowledge and risk assessment, and the empowerment of partners based on their effectiveness and expertise, rather than more politically democratic, socially just or ecologically sustainable criteria. The need to demonstrate auditable success through

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<sup>42</sup> A. Agrawal, *Environmentality: Technologies of Government and the Making of Subjects*, (Durham; Duke University Press, 2005); T. Kuehls, *Beyond Sovereign Territory: The Space of Ecopolitics*, (Minneapolis; University of Minnesota Press, 1996); T. W. Luke, 'Environmentality as Green Governmentality', in E. Darier (ed.), *Discourses of the Environment*, (Oxford; Blackwell, 1999), pp. 121 – 151; T. W. Luke, 'On Environmentality: Geo-Power and Eco-Knowledge in the Discourses of Contemporary Environmentalism', *Cultural Critique*, 31, (1995), pp. 57 – 81.

compartmentalised partnerships militates against solving complex structural problems, such as climate change, poverty and gender inequality, in favour of isolated technical solutions, such as carbon credits and trading, technology transfers and quotas for major group participation. By highlighting these effects this chapter seeks to re-politicise a sustainable development discourse that has been increasingly framed in terms of partnership, consensus and efficiency.

Chapter four directs attention toward the significance of the theatrical performance of sustainable development at the WSSD. Modern summits must be understood as more than just institutional techniques for producing negotiated outcomes, and their processes, rituals, symbolism and choreography all have political effects. Inspired by Clifford Geertz's work on the theatre-state in nineteenth century Bali, this chapter argues that the WSSD can be read as a form of political theatre in which Johannesburg was an "exemplary centre" that projected a particular order and way of governing far beyond the immediate environs of the Summit itself, illustrating "the power of grandeur to organize the world."<sup>43</sup> As such it contributes to an understanding of the mechanisms by which advanced liberal government operates at a distance and through the creation of responsible, self-governing subjects. These mechanisms include the mobilisation of public relations strategies, brand management and advertising, and the empowerment of a new and diverse cast of actors for sustainable development, including international institutions, NGOs, businesses, as well as the familiar leading players in international politics, states and their representatives. The WSSD is thus part of a shift from state-centric to more polyvalent and dispersed models of governance.<sup>44</sup> This is not to argue that states have been eclipsed as political actors, however, and South Africa, in particular, used the Summit stage with great success to perform its national brand as 'the negotiating capital of the world' and the 'custodians of sustainable development'. Rather, the ways in which states and state institutions function within broader assemblages of

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<sup>43</sup> C. Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre-State in Nineteenth Century Bali*, (Princeton; PUP, 1980), pp. 13 and 102.

<sup>44</sup> K. Dingwerth and P. Pattberg, 'Global Governance as a Perspective on World Politics', *Global Governance*, 12, (2006), pp. 185 – 203; S. Foreman and D. Segaar, 'New Coalitions for Global Governance: The Changing Dynamics of Multilateralism', *Global Governance*, 12, (2006), pp. 205 – 225; D. Held and A. McGrew (eds.), *Governing Globalization: Power, Authority and Global Governance*, (Cambridge; Polity Press, 2002); R. O'Brien, A. M. Goetz, J. A. Scholte, and M. Williams, *Contesting Global Governance: Multilateral Economic Institutions and Global Social Movements*, (Cambridge; CUP, 2000); J. N. Rosenau, 'Governance in the Twenty-First Century', *Global Governance*, 1, (1995), pp. 13 – 43.

governance is changing. Through schemes such as the Johannesburg Climate Legacy initiative businesses and private actors have been inserted into these regimes of governance, becoming reconfigured as central actors for sustainable development through their ability to stimulate “change in behaviours and attitudes of peoples around the world.”<sup>45</sup>

Chapter five introduces a note of dissension in the hitherto relatively smooth extension of advanced liberal government at the WSSD. The Summit was also the occasion for heated protests, dissent and clashes on the streets of Johannesburg, and this chapter argues that these are essential to any analysis of the political effects of the WSSD and sustainable development. By viewing these protests as examples of what Foucault terms “counter-conducts” – struggles “against the processes implemented for conducting others” – rather than as instances of ‘pure’ resistance, it is possible to show how they simultaneously subverted and reinforced modes of advanced liberal government.<sup>46</sup> As such this chapter reflects the way Foucault showed how “the history of the governmental *ratio*, and the history of the counter-conducts opposed to it, are inseparable from each other.”<sup>47</sup> Yet the political effects of the forms of resistance adopted were significant. Whilst groups like Greenpeace, Earthlife Africa and Groundwork managed to successfully negotiate the relationship between resistance and partnership at the Summit, others who contested the rationality of consensus and partnership more vociferously found themselves beyond the limits of not only Summit politics but also the dominant framing of democratic politics in South Africa. The limits of advanced liberal government were accordingly revealed, and groups like the Landless People’s Movement and the EJNF were variously vilified, marginalised or repressed at the WSSD and thereafter. These events confirmed that in order to participate in the politics of sustainable development as legitimate actors, discourses of cooperative partnership and consensus had to be observed.

The thesis conclusion therefore shows how the WSSD re-orientated the discourse of sustainable development toward forms of advanced liberal governmentality; demonstrates how summits operate as techniques of exemplary government; and highlights how the political status of participants and protestors was decided according to norms of partnership and consensus. It situates the political

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<sup>45</sup> Future Forests, *Greening the WSSD*, p. 1.

<sup>46</sup> M. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977 – 1978*, (ed. M. Senellart, tr. G. Burchell), (Basingstoke; Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 201.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p. 357.

effects of the WSSD in the context of broader power relationships and the global politics of environment and development, concluding that the WSSD worked to make politically sustainable (perhaps only temporarily) a global order which is manifestly unsustainable, whilst also providing opportunities for the *status quo* to be protested and resisted. Whilst the partnership approach threatens the compartmentalisation of the broader sustainable development discourse, it has also politicised its implementation by provoking myriad protests and demonstrations. As such this thesis contributes not only to our understanding of the WSSD and summitry, the evolution of the discourse of sustainable development, and the politics of resistance in South Africa, but also to broader debates about the radical or counter-cultural potential of sustainable development politics.<sup>48</sup>

This concern with the role and future of critical environmentalism is a timely one. It is commonly accepted that environmental degradation and social inequalities present significant problems in many parts of the world, and that progress on resolving them has been slow or non-existent.<sup>49</sup> The UN Resolution mandating the WSSD noted with deep concern that

despite the many successful and continuing efforts of the international community since the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment ... and the fact that some progress has been achieved, the environment and the natural resource base that support life on earth continue to deteriorate at an alarming rate.<sup>50</sup>

Paradoxically however, this trend of worsening environmental degradation has been paralleled by increasing global environmental awareness, concern and political activism. As such Wapner has argued that the Johannesburg Summit signalled a disjuncture between rising public support for environmental agendas and falling effectiveness of environmental movements in challenging contemporary ways of life, indicating that “environmentalism, as a reliable public sensibility, is itself in trouble.”<sup>51</sup> For Ingolfur Blühdorn and Ian Welsh, the discourse of sustainable development has been deeply implicated in this disjuncture, playing a key role “in

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<sup>48</sup> M. Hajer and F. Fischer, ‘Beyond Global Discourse: The Rediscovery of Culture in Environmental Politics’, in F. Fischer and M. A. Hajer (eds.), *Living With Nature: Environmental Politics as Cultural Discourse*, (Oxford; OUP, 1999), pp. 1 – 20.

<sup>49</sup> N. Stern, *The Economics of Climate Change: The Stern Review*, (Cambridge; CUP, 2007); UN, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2006*, (New York; UN, 2006); UNEP, *Geo Yearbook 2007*, (Nairobi; UNEP, 2007); World Resources Institute, *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, Ecosystems and Human Wellbeing: Synthesis*, (Washington DC; Island Press, 2005).

<sup>50</sup> UN, *Resolution 55/199*, p. 2.

<sup>51</sup> Wapner, ‘World Summit on Sustainable Development’, p. 7.



obtaining the status of a ‘non-controversial public concern’ for the environment.”<sup>52</sup> The blunting of the radical potential of the earlier ecological movements through their insertion within mainstream political culture implies that we have entered an era of what they call “post-ecologism.”<sup>53</sup> This era, they assert, demands new lines of enquiry, including: “How do advanced modern capitalist consumer democracies try and manage to sustain what is known to be unsustainable?”<sup>54</sup> In the context of this evolving debate around the counter-cultural potential of the environmental agenda this thesis shows how the WSSD functions as a technique for sustaining the unsustainable, whilst also throwing such techniques into question. Whereas many have argued that the concept of sustainable development and its integration into the processes of UN diplomacy have neutralised the radicalism of environmental movements, this thesis argues that it is always possible to destabilise conventionally accepted understandings, to problematise the ways in which the government of conduct is attempted, and to politicise and re-radicalise the politics of environment and development.

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<sup>52</sup> I. Blühdorn and I. Welsh, ‘Eco-Politics Beyond the Paradigm of Sustainability: A Conceptual Framework and Research Agenda’, *Environmental Politics*, 16, 2, (2007), p. 188.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p. 185. See also T. Luke, ‘The Death of Environmentalism or the Advent of Public Ecology?’, *Organization and Environment*, 18, 4, (2005), pp. 489 – 494; M. Shellenberger and T. Nordhaus, *The Death of Environmentalism: Global Warming Politics in a Post-Environmental World*, (2004); and M. Wissenburg and Y. Levy (eds.), *Liberal Democracy and Environmentalism: The End of Environmentalism?*, (London; Routledge, 2004).

<sup>54</sup> Blühdorn and Welsh, ‘Eco-Politics Beyond the Paradigm of Sustainability’, p. 198.

## Chapter 1

# Power, Discourse, Government:

## A Foucauldian perspective on Sustainable Development and Summitry

*The political vocabulary structured by oppositions between state and civil society, public and private, government and market, coercion and consent, sovereignty and autonomy and the like, does not adequately characterise the diverse ways in which rule is exercised in advanced liberal democracies.*

*Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller, 1992*<sup>1</sup>

### *Introduction*

The Johannesburg Summit was a complex, multi-layered event, and there are many ways in which it can be approached. This chapter argues that a Foucauldian perspective highlights different facets to other theoretical approaches. Such a perspective questions many of the binaries which have conventionally structured political thought: the domestic and international, the state and civil society, power and freedom, government and resistance.

The chapter proceeds by explaining how Michel Foucault used and defined the concepts of power/knowledge, discourse, and governmentality, and demonstrates their implications for concepts such as civil society, summitry, and political resistance. These concepts provide the tools for a Foucauldian analysis of the politics of sustainable development and a methodological approach for the thesis which, drawing on the framework established by Mitchell Dean, analyses rationalities of government according to the field of visibility they establish, the regimes of knowledge they

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<sup>1</sup> Rose and Miller, 'Political Power beyond the State', p. 174.

invoke, the techniques and technologies they mobilise and the subjectivities and identities they produce.<sup>2</sup>

The fundamental reason for employing a Foucauldian approach is a desire to understand sustainable development as something more than a neutral concept or scientific term employed on behalf of the public good, but also to avoid reducing it to an ideological mystification or piece of cynical hypocrisy that merely entrenches existing power relationships. It is mobilised by a desire to examine what sustainable development and the WSSD actually do, and how they fit into contemporary relations of power and government. It is not enough merely to bemoan the failure of sustainable development summits to solve environmental and development problems – it is important to also ask what is served or produced by their failure, and how they structure global politics in certain ways.<sup>3</sup> A more sophisticated understanding of the mutually constitutive interaction between forms of knowledge and relationships of power is therefore required, as is a scepticism to starkly binary accounts which oppose power to resistance, and ‘Truth’ to ideology.

### ***Power/knowledge***

The relationship between truth, power and knowledge is at the heart of a Foucauldian approach. Foucault argued that “‘truth’ is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it”; thus “truth is already power.”<sup>4</sup> In *Discipline and Punish* he argued that we should try to rid ourselves of the idea that true knowledge can only exist in the absence of power, and that power corrupts knowledge. He suggested that

we should admit rather that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that

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<sup>2</sup> Dean, *Governmentality*, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> This takes its cue from Foucault who asked “what is served by the failure of the prison?” M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (tr. A. Sheridan), (London; Penguin, 1991), p. 272. For similar approaches see R. Abrahamsen, *Disciplining Democracy: Development Discourse and Good Governance in Africa*, (London; Zed Books, 2000), p. 138; and J. Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: ‘Development’, Depoliticization and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*, (Minneapolis; University of Minnesota Press, 1994), p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> M. Foucault, ‘Truth and Power’, in *Power*, pp. 132 – 133.

power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.<sup>5</sup>

This formulation of the mutually dependent relationship between knowledge and power provides the basis for a Foucauldian approach to sustainable development. There are two implications which stem from this. First, we can reject the somewhat simplistic assumption that sustainable development is a scientifically objective transcendental ‘Truth’, free from entanglement in power relations. Secondly, a note of caution is sounded with respect to more sophisticated ideological interpretations which apparently oppose the hypocritical or misleading ‘truth’ of sustainable development to deeper ‘Truths’ about society and politics. As an example of the latter, in Neil Middleton and Phil O’Keefe’s study, *Redefining Sustainable Development*, they “look at the ways in which the word [sustainable development] is used by theorists and practitioners in development and at some of the principal agendas these uses conceal.”<sup>6</sup> In their chapter entitled ‘Polite Meaningless Words’ they set out how linguistic strategies on behalf of transnational capital have reinforced existing power relations, arguing that controlling elites “tinker with our consciousness” in order to conceal their real agendas, and conclude that sustainable development “is often used to conceal a disagreeable reality.”<sup>7</sup>

A Foucauldian perspective throws doubt on these positivist claims to directly access reality or identify more fundamental truths, since these forms of knowledge are always produced by and through particular power relationships.<sup>8</sup> For many environmentalists, for example, it is a basic truth that the Earth is a closed system with finite limits to growth, yet the discourse of sustainable development counterposes the truth that human ingenuity has the potential to extend those limits and create new resources. That both of these assertions are, within their own regimes of power/knowledge, “in the true” as Foucault would say, implies that there is no

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<sup>5</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 27.

<sup>6</sup> N. Middleton and P. O’Keefe, *Redefining Sustainable Development*, (London; Pluto Press, 2001), p. 32.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p. 31.

<sup>8</sup> Steve Smith identifies four central assumptions of positivist perspectives: the unity of science; the distinction between (objective) facts and (subjective) values; that the social world has fundamental regularities; and a belief that ‘true’ knowledge is empirically verifiable. S. Smith, ‘Positivism and Beyond’, in S. Smith, K. Booth and M. Zalewski, *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*, (Cambridge; CUP, 1996), p. 16.

overarching or fundamental ‘Truth’ on which all else depends.<sup>9</sup> Thus the analysis of a discourse, for Foucault, “does not question things said as to what they are hiding, what they were ‘really’ saying ... it is a description of things said, precisely as they were said.”<sup>10</sup> As Roxanne Lynne Doty explains, the task is “not deciphering the texts to get at the true intentions of the authors”, but rather, texts “are intertexts linked with a wide array of discourses and representational practices ... In this sense, the meaning and significance of the texts cannot be limited to the purposes and intentions of the authors.”<sup>11</sup>

This is often described as a post-positivist epistemological perspective, which asserts that reality as such is unknowable except through the meaning we ascribe it.<sup>12</sup> Whilst conventional approaches treat language as a “transparent” link between thoughts and things, poststructuralists treat language as “opaque”, incapable of illuminating any deeper truth or reality.<sup>13</sup> Instead of directly studying unmediated reality, social science inevitably studies various representations of reality, including language, art, institutional structures and conceptual frameworks.<sup>14</sup>

Contrary to the claims of skeptical detractors, this is not to deny the existence of reality. Clearly things happen independently of thought and representation, but even ‘natural’ events like global warming or species extinction are unknowable except through the meanings we ascribe them.<sup>15</sup> Whether they are understood as acts of God, arbitrary natural phenomena, or the result of man-made climate change is due to socially and discursively constructed structures of meaning.

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<sup>9</sup> M. Foucault, ‘The Order of Discourse: Inaugural Lecture at the Collège de France, 1970’, in R. Young (ed.), *Untying the Text: A Poststructuralist Reader*, (London; Routledge, 1981), pp. 60 – 61.

<sup>10</sup> M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, (tr. A. M. Sheridan Smith), (London; Routledge, 2002), p. 123.

<sup>11</sup> R. L. Doty, *Imperial Encounters: The Politics of Representation in North-South Relations*, (Minneapolis; University of Minnesota, 1996), p. 147.

<sup>12</sup> C. Brown, “‘Turtles all the way down’: Anti-foundationalism, Critical Theory and International Relations”, *Millennium*, 23, 2, (1994), pp. 213 – 236; J. Der Derian and M. Shapiro (eds.), *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*, (New York; Lexington, 1989); Smith, ‘Positivism and Beyond’.

<sup>13</sup> M. Shapiro, ‘Textualising Global Politics’, in Der Derian and Shapiro, *International/Intertextual Relations*, p. 14. See also M. Edelman, ‘Political Language and Political Reality’, *Political Science*, 18, 1, (1985), pp. 10 – 19.

<sup>14</sup> R. Bleiker, ‘The Aesthetic Turn in International Political Theory’, *Millennium*, 30, 3, (2001), pp. 509 – 533.

<sup>15</sup> J. Dingler, ‘The Discursive Nature of Nature: Towards a Postmodern Concept of Nature’, *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning*, 7, 3, (2005), pp. 209 – 225; E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, (London; Verso, 2001), p. 108; J. Weldes, *Constructing National Interests: The United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis*, (Minneapolis; University of Minnesota Press, 1999), pp. 115 – 118.

These structures of meaning both produce, and are produced by, relationships of power. Power relations are central to the Foucauldian approach; indeed he famously asserted that “power is everywhere.”<sup>16</sup> Foucault’s approach to power is markedly different from the way it is conventionally used to imply a capacity or strength possessed by a particular actor. For Foucault, “power is not a substance ... Power is only a certain type of relation between individuals ... The characteristic feature of power is that some men can more or less entirely determine other men’s conduct – but never exhaustively or coercively.”<sup>17</sup> Power is “a set of actions on possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult” – it is the “‘conduct of conducts’ and a management of possibilities.”<sup>18</sup> In *The History of Sexuality* Foucault explains that,

by power, I do not mean ‘Power’ as a group of institutions and mechanisms that ensure the subservience of the citizens of a given state. By power, I do not mean, either, a mode of subjugation which, in contrast to violence, has the form of the rule. Finally, I do not have in mind a general system of domination exerted by one group over another.<sup>19</sup>

Rather, power is “the multiplicity of force relations” in a certain sphere, characterised by the strategies, tactics, manoeuvres and struggles that social relationships involve.<sup>20</sup> Thus “power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is a name one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society.”<sup>21</sup> Power is not something that is possessed, located or transferred, “it must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather a something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody’s hands.”<sup>22</sup> Whilst power clearly has effects, and the field of power relations favours some and disadvantages others, Foucault cautions that “this does not mean that [power] results from the choice or decision of an individual subject; let us not look for the headquarters that presides over its rationality.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> M. Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1, (tr. R. Hurley), (London; Penguin, 1998), p. 93.

<sup>17</sup> M. Foucault, ‘Omnes et Singulatim: Towards a Critique of Political Reason’, in *Power*, p. 324.

<sup>18</sup> M. Foucault, ‘The Subject and Power’, in *Power*, p. 341.

<sup>19</sup> Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, p. 92.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, pp. 92 – 93. See also M. Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France 1975 – 1976*, (eds. M. Bertani and A. Fontana, tr. D. Macey), (London; Allen Lane, 2003).

<sup>21</sup> Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, p. 93.

<sup>22</sup> M. Foucault, ‘Two Lectures’, in M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972 – 1977*, (ed. and tr. C. Gordon et al), (New York; Harvester, 1980), p. 98.

<sup>23</sup> Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, p. 95.

This view of power as a relationship rather than a substance is central to the Foucauldian approach, and explains the claim that power is everywhere. Power is everywhere because any type of society is suffused with and constituted by power relationships. Thus “relations of power are not in a position of exteriority with respect to other types of relationship (economic processes, knowledge relationships, sexual relationships), but are immanent in the latter.”<sup>24</sup> As a result, Foucault’s view of power questions the opposition between power and freedom; it is impossible, according to Foucault, to dissolve or escape power relations entirely.

Some regard this pervasiveness of power as a depressing and pessimistic element of Foucault’s thought.<sup>25</sup> However, one of Foucault’s most important reformulations of the concept of power was to deny the repressive hypothesis: the notion that power only works to dominate, discipline and limit.<sup>26</sup> He argued that this is a very limited view and that power must also be understood as productive, since it “induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse.”<sup>27</sup> For example, in *The History of Sexuality* he showed how, from the seventeenth century, discourses produced certain forms of sexuality, both norms and deviations.<sup>28</sup> It is the productive element of power that allows us to see it at work far beyond relations of domination and repression, and even within liberal practices of freedom and civic participation. The production of the free, rational, individual subject is a result of certain power relationships, just as the production of the medieval serf or classical slave was the result of specific power relationships.

It is in this respect that the Foucauldian view of power differs most dramatically from the ways it is most commonly used in political theory. Barry Hindess has shown how Steven Lukes’ three views of power – the power to achieve something against open resistance; the power to covertly determine the political agenda; and “instances of the exercise of power in which its victims fail even to recognise that their real interests are at risk, and consequently make no attempt to defend those interests” – all depend upon a view of power as a capacity possessed by pre-constituted actors.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Marxist and Gramscian views of power and

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p. 94.

<sup>25</sup> J. L. Cohen and A. Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, (Cambridge MA; MIT Press, 1994), pp. 286 – 290.

<sup>26</sup> Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, p. 10; Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, p. 15.

<sup>27</sup> Foucault, ‘Truth and Power’, p. 120.

<sup>28</sup> Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*.

<sup>29</sup> B. Hindess, *Discourses of Power: From Hobbes to Foucault*, (Oxford; Blackwell, 1996), p. 5.

hegemony, where the oppressed consent because they cannot perceive their oppression, also rely upon seeing power as capacity.<sup>30</sup> In contrast a Foucauldian conception of power as a strategic game, as a set of relations, allows for a productive view of power in which actors' subject positions, interests and identities are produced through power relations.<sup>31</sup>

Foucault's historical work famously investigated the forms of knowledge and power relations by which particular subjects such as 'the mad', 'the sexual deviant', and 'the criminal' were produced.<sup>32</sup> Such an attitude towards subjectivity is one of the key insights which, for Jenny Edkins, allow the "de-centering of the subject" in poststructuralist political theory, a move which rejects the idea of a sovereign, unified human subject, pre-existing discourse.<sup>33</sup> As a result, identity is viewed as relational and discursively constructed, rather than pre-given, timeless and fixed. This applies to both individual identities as well as the identities of international actors such as states, and Jutta Weldes, for example, has shown how "the US" is created as a political subject with a "national interest" through discursive forms of power.<sup>34</sup> One implication of this is that the familiar agent/structure debate with respect to power is displaced. For Foucault, power both creates and works through individuals and structures, since "the individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle."<sup>35</sup> As Doty explains, "both agency and structural understandings of power presuppose that agents and structures exist prior to power, rather than themselves being effects of power."<sup>36</sup>

Bringing a Foucauldian perspective on power/knowledge to bear on sustainable development enables an analysis of the ways in which new actors, relationships and regimes of knowledge are produced and resisted. Rather than a neutral concept to be utilised by certain actors for instrumental purposes – or an ideological strategy deployed to mystify and obscure the exploitation of particular

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, pp. 5 – 6.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, chapter 5.

<sup>32</sup> M. Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, (tr. R. Howard), (London; Routledge, 1997); Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*; and Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

<sup>33</sup> This move draws upon Saussurian semiology; Freudian psychoanalysis; feminist theory; Marxist analysis of how individuals are a product of socio-economic relations; and Foucauldian accounts of the production of subjectivity through power relations. See J. Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations: Bringing the Political Back In*, (London; Lynne Rienner, 1999), chapters two and three.

<sup>34</sup> Weldes, *Constructing National Interests*. See also J. Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, (Stanford; Stanford University Press, 1997).

<sup>35</sup> Foucault, 'Two Lectures', p. 98.

<sup>36</sup> Doty, *Imperial Encounters*, p. 166.



classes – a Foucauldian perspective on power argues that the discourse of sustainable development has particular effects, and produces new forms of knowledge and political agency.

### *Discourse*

Formations of power/knowledge such as sustainable development are referred to by Foucault as discourses, and they constitute certain ways of thinking about, representing and acting upon the world. Within discourses particular things are made visible and others invisible, ‘truths’ are created and regimes of knowledge established, practices and technologies are concretised and subjects are produced. For Foucault, “discursive practices are characterised by the demarcation of a field of objects, by the definition of a legitimate perspective for a subject of knowledge, by the setting of norms for elaborating concepts and themes.”<sup>37</sup> Discourses are thus more than just language or words; they are systems of representation that produce meaning itself.<sup>38</sup> Foucault famously described discourses as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak.”<sup>39</sup> Discourse, knowledge and power are all inextricably linked and mutually re-producing. As he explained, “discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but it is the thing for which and by which there is a struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized.”<sup>40</sup>

Foucault’s concept of discourse is however somewhat enigmatic, and in his work he admitted he had treated the concept in different ways at different times, “sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualisable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a certain number of statements.”<sup>41</sup> Yet, when pressed, he defined discourse as “the group of statements that belong to a single system of formation.”<sup>42</sup> Central to this notion of a

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<sup>37</sup> M. Foucault, ‘The Will to Knowledge’, in *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth: Essential Works of Foucault 1954 – 1984*, Vol. 1, (ed. P. Rabinow, tr. R. Hurley *et al*), (New York; The New Press, 1997), p. 11.

<sup>38</sup> S. Hall, ‘Foucault: Power, Knowledge, Discourse’, in M. Wetherall, S. Taylor and S. J. Yates (eds.), *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*, (London; Sage, 2001), p. 72.

<sup>39</sup> Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 54.

<sup>40</sup> Foucault, ‘The Order of Discourse’, pp. 52 – 53.

<sup>41</sup> Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 90.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, p. 121.

discursive statement is the question of who is speaking, who is qualified or has the right to speak through that discourse. Foucault noted that

medical statements cannot come from anybody; their value, their efficacy, even their therapeutic powers, and, generally speaking, their existence as medical statements cannot be disassociated from the statutorily defined person who has the right to make them, and to claim for them the power to overcome suffering and death.<sup>43</sup>

As Robert Young explains, Foucauldian statements “are both events and things, as well as pieces of language.”<sup>44</sup> The idea of a statement to the police captures this – it consists of language, but acquires its meaning through its location and the institutional setting. Thus discourses are constituted through texts, authoritative actors, forms of knowledge and prioritised sites and institutions. As Arturo Escobar makes clear, “discourse is not just words ... Discourse is not the expression of thought: it is a practice, with conditions, rules and historical transformations.”<sup>45</sup> The development discourse, for example, “results in concrete practices of thinking and acting through which the Third World is produced.”<sup>46</sup>

Discourses such as development coexist and compete with multiple other discourses and our overall world-view is therefore a product of multiple and varied discourses interacting, clashing, overlapping and fracturing. This plurality has been termed the “play of practice” or, for Foucault, the “tactical polyvalence of discourses.”<sup>47</sup> As such, according to Doty, discourses

are constituted by other discourses that are themselves also open, inherently unstable, and always in the process of being articulated. This understanding of discourse implies an overlapping quality to different discourses. Any fixing of a discourse and the identities that are constructed by it can only be of a partial nature. It is the overflowing and incomplete nature of discourse that opens up spaces for change, discontinuity, and variation.<sup>48</sup>

It is this element of radical plurality within discursive fields that militates against the tendency to attribute an overly restrictive, dominating or oppressive logic to

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p. 56.

<sup>44</sup> R. J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, (Oxford; Blackwell, 2001), p. 402.

<sup>45</sup> A. Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, (Princeton; PUP, 1995), p. 216.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>47</sup> J. Milliken, ‘The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 5, 2, (1999), p. 230; Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, pp. 100 – 102.

<sup>48</sup> Doty, *Imperial Encounters*, p. 6.

Foucauldian discourse theory. Young notes that even an individual “discourse rarely possesses a set of concepts that form a logical totality or coherent whole; its concepts, moreover, are not static but always changing, in a state of transformation.”<sup>49</sup>

Despite this, some have read Foucauldian discourses as unitary, monolithic and impenetrable.<sup>50</sup> John Dryzek, for example, interprets Foucault as seeing discourses as “mostly oppressive”, and as denying the possibility of counter-hegemonic discourses and spaces for resistance.<sup>51</sup> He suggests an alternative reading of discourse as “powerful” but “not impenetrable.”<sup>52</sup> Such a reading of Foucault imputes to individual discourses an overly oppressive status, as well as missing out on the dynamic tension within discourses between the ever-present possibility of resistance, and the fact that subjectivities – the positions from which resistance is thinkable and possible – are themselves products of discourses and power relationships. Certainly, when it comes to specific discourses, such as sustainable development, a Foucauldian perspective does not imply a monolithic or hegemonic totality that denies the possibility of resistance. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault stressed that his approach differed from conventional approaches to the history of ideas in that “the history of a concept is not wholly and entirely that of its progressive refinement”, but rather is one of discontinuity, rupture and contingency.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, he made it clear that “it was possible for men [sic], within the same discursive practice, to speak of different objects, to have contrary opinions, to make contradictory choices.”<sup>54</sup> Purvis and Hunt agree that “discourses ‘channel’ rather than ‘control’ the discursive possibilities, facilitating some things being said and others impeded.”<sup>55</sup> And as Milliken observes, “the open-endedness and instability of

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<sup>49</sup> Young, *Postcolonialism*, p. 404.

<sup>50</sup> Cohen and Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, pp. 291 – 292; J. N. Pieterse, ‘After Post-Development’, *Third World Quarterly*, 21, 2, (2000), pp. 175 – 191.

<sup>51</sup> J. S. Dryzek, *Deliberative Global Politics: Discourse and Democracy in a Divided World*, (Cambridge; Polity Press, 2006), p. 39.

<sup>52</sup> J. S. Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses*, (Oxford; OUP, 2005), p. 20. Elsewhere Dryzek draws directly on Foucault and uses a very similar account of discourse as “a shared set of concepts, categories, and ideas that provide its adherents with a framework for making sense of situations, embodying judgments, assumptions, capabilities, dispositions and intentions.” Such discourses include practices, since “even something as simple as presenting a passport at immigration control helps reinforce the discourse of sovereignty.” Dryzek, *Deliberative Global Politics*, pp. 1 – 3.

<sup>53</sup> Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 5.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p. 221.

<sup>55</sup> T. Purvis and A. Hunt, ‘Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology ...’, *The British Journal of Sociology*, 44, 3, (1993), p. 486.

discourses means that they are liable to slip and slide into new relationships via resistances that their articulation and operationalisation may engender.”<sup>56</sup>

This account of Foucauldian discourse theory is similar to sophisticated articulations of the Gramscian-derived concept of ideology within Marxist theory, where ideological structures form the background to our experiences of the world.<sup>57</sup> However, Purvis and Hunt note that the Marxist concept of ideology goes beyond this positive ‘world-view’ to a more *critical* claim which asserts not only that “all thought is socially constructed – which is true but insufficient”, but that “ideology exhibits a directionality in the sense that ideology always works to favour some and to disadvantage others.”<sup>58</sup> Whilst discourses also can be said to have ‘directionality’, and certainly have a constitutive role in power relationships, it is here that ideological approaches can tend towards notions of false consciousness or mystification. Foucault was reluctant to use the concept of ideology as it appeared to rest on three problematic assumptions. First, ideology “always stands in virtual opposition to something else which is supposed to count as the Truth.”<sup>59</sup> Secondly, it relies upon an individual human subject, pre-existing discourse and power relations, able to manipulate and purposively deploy ideology. Thirdly, “ideology stands in a secondary position relative to something which functions as its infrastructure, as its material, economic determinant.”<sup>60</sup> For Foucault, discourse is not merely the ideological manifestation or legitimisation of material structures, and it has a constitutive and determinative role in producing social reality.

This thesis approaches sustainable development as a Foucauldian discourse which represents issues and problems in a certain way, authorises and establishes certain forms of knowledge, is made manifest in particular techniques and technologies, and produces particular subjects. Discourses have particular effects and structure power relationships in certain ways. In so doing this thesis is situated in relationship to a growing body of Foucauldian-influenced work in political and international studies, within which seminal texts have analyzed the discourses of,

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<sup>56</sup> Milliken, ‘The Study of Discourse in International Relations’, p. 242.

<sup>57</sup> Purvis and Hunt, ‘Discourse, Ideology’, p. 477.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p. 478.

<sup>59</sup> Foucault, ‘Truth and Power’, p. 119.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. For more detailed discussions see M. Barrett, *The Politics of Truth: From Marx to Foucault*, (Cambridge; Polity Press, 1991), chapter 6; D. Howarth, ‘An Archaeology of Political Discourse? Evaluating Michel Foucault’s Explanation and Critique of Ideology’, *Political Studies*, 50, (2002), pp. 117 – 135; D. Howarth, *Discourse*, (Buckingham; Open University Press, 2000), chapter 5; and Purvis and Hunt, ‘Discourse, Ideology’.

among others, colonialism, development, South African Apartheid, Orientalism, International Relations theory and United States foreign policy.<sup>61</sup> A growing body of work has also emerged applying Foucauldian discourse theory in some form to the analysis of environmental politics.<sup>62</sup>

### ***Governmentality***

The specific form of discourse analysis deployed in this thesis focuses on the Foucauldian concept of governmentality. Foucault's historical work investigated the different formations and rationalities of power/knowledge and discourse in various periods of history – specifically through the discourses of criminality, sexuality, and madness. Through these analyses Foucault came to argue that there were three central, co-existing but distinct, historical forms of power: sovereign or juridical power, disciplinary power, and governmental power.<sup>63</sup>

The first of these is that associated with the law, the highest executive power, and the right of the sovereign to take life, power as seizure.<sup>64</sup> It works through the prohibition – “you must not kill, you must not steal” – and the subsequent punishment.<sup>65</sup> Sovereign power was rarely absolute as even a divinely-appointed ruler was expected to rule wisely, but its ultimate justification was the security and safety of the ruler or the state. This is the *raison d'état* of Machiavelli's prince.<sup>66</sup> In its more

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<sup>61</sup> Doty, *Imperial Encounters*; Escobar, *Encountering Development*; Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*; A. J. Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse*, (London; Verso, 1996); E. Said, *Orientalism*, (London; Penguin, 2003); R. B. J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*, (Cambridge; CUP, 1993); Weldes, *Constructing National Interests*.

<sup>62</sup> For example, J. Bennett and W. Chaloupka (eds.), *In the Nature of Things: Language, Politics and the Environment*, (Minneapolis; University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Darier, *Discourses of the Environment*; Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth*; M. Hajer, *The Politics of Environmental Discourse: Ecological Modernization and the Policy Process*, (Oxford; Clarendon, 1995); Kuehls, *Beyond Sovereign Territory*; K. Litfin, *Ozone Discourses: Science and Politics in Global Environmental Cooperation*, (New York; Columbia University Press, 1994); W. Magnusson and K. Shaw (eds.), *A Political Space: Reading the Global through Clayoquot Sound*, (Minneapolis; University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

<sup>63</sup> Foucault, ‘Governmentality’, pp. 218 – 219. See also A. Barry, T. Osborne and N. Rose, ‘Introduction’, in A. Barry, T. Osborne and N. Rose (eds.), *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, neo-liberalism and rationalities of government*, (London; UCL Press, 1996); and Hindess, *Discourses of Power*, chapter five.

<sup>64</sup> Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, pp. 135 – 136.

<sup>65</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 4.

<sup>66</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*; Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 92.

modern form, Foucault explains, sovereign or juridical power is “exercised mainly as a means of deduction, a subtraction mechanism, a right to appropriate a portion of the wealth, a tax of products, goods and services, labour and blood, levied on the subjects.”<sup>67</sup>

Since the classical and medieval ages, Foucault argued, this deductive form of power has become merely one means among many and is no longer the primary expression of power. Wars, taxes and the death penalty still exist, but they are no longer primarily justified through *raison d’etat*. Beginning in the seventeenth century new forms of power emerged which sought primarily to “foster life” rather than take it.<sup>68</sup> Disciplinary forms of power were focussed on regulating and structuring the actions of individual bodies, whilst bio-political forms of power operated at the level of the population or species-body.<sup>69</sup> Famously Foucault showed how the criminal justice system produced disciplined and docile individual bodies through powerful surveillance techniques such as Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon.<sup>70</sup>

The third form of power, governmental power, emerged in the eighteenth century in Europe and worked to regulate the “conduct of conduct” and ensure “the right disposition of things”, rather than rule directly over territory or bodies.<sup>71</sup> The ‘conduct of conduct’ implies the shaping or guiding of possible actions; according to Foucault “to govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others.”<sup>72</sup> Foucault termed this form of power “governmentality”, or the rationality of government.<sup>73</sup> Government is used in its broadest sense here as ‘the conduct of conduct’, which during the sixteenth century was applied to the regulation of oneself (morality), of souls and lives (pastoral religion), of children (pedagogy), of the family (economy), as well as of the state (politics).<sup>74</sup> ‘Government’ is therefore defined by Dean as

any more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through our desires, aspirations, interests and

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<sup>67</sup> Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, p. 136.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, pp. 138 – 139.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, p. 139.

<sup>70</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*; Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, pp. 35 – 36.

<sup>71</sup> Dean, *Governmentality*, p. 9; Foucault, ‘Governmentality’, p. 210; Gordon, ‘Governmental Rationality’, p. 2.

<sup>72</sup> Foucault, ‘The Subject and Power’, p. 341.

<sup>73</sup> Foucault, ‘Governmentality’; Gordon, ‘Governmental Rationality’, p. 3.

<sup>74</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 88.

beliefs, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects and outcomes.<sup>75</sup>

Rather than replacing sovereign or disciplinary power, these forms were re-articulated within a governmental rationality to form a triangle: “sovereignty, discipline, and governmental management, which has population as its main target and apparatuses of security as its essential mechanism.”<sup>76</sup>

The analysis of governmentality was in part a response to the Marxist critique that Foucault’s work on disciplinary mechanisms failed to account for macro-political structures.<sup>77</sup> Instead of focussing on specific injunctions, laws and punishments, or centralised surveillance and disciplinary techniques, a governmentality analysis addressed how certain forms of power sought to influence the conduct of free subjects “at a distance” through the advice of experts and the establishment of particular norms.<sup>78</sup> Government at a distance is predicated upon encouraging and facilitating the self-government of others, and is a form of rule that “seeks to establish institutional spaces – government departments, community organisations, service deliverers – as self-managing local centres”, governed according to formal standards of accountability and conduct.<sup>79</sup> For Foucault this marked a clear break from earlier forms of power since

whereas the end of sovereignty is internal to itself and gets its instruments from itself in the form of law, the end of government is internal to the things it directs; it is to be sought in the perfection, maximimisation, or intensification of the processes it directs, and the instruments of government will become diverse tactics rather than laws.<sup>80</sup>

Therefore the purpose of a governmental rationality is the welfare of the population itself – “to increase its wealth, its longevity and its health” – rather than the security of the state or sovereign; and the tools of government are immanent to the population, including measures to stimulate the birth rate or provide incentives for investment or migration to certain regions or activities.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Dean, *Governmentality*, p. 11.

<sup>76</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, pp. 107 – 108.

<sup>77</sup> Gordon, ‘Governmental Rationality’, p. 4.

<sup>78</sup> Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, p. 49; Rose and Miller, ‘Political Power beyond the State’.

<sup>79</sup> Dean, *Governmentality*, p. 169.

<sup>80</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 99.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, p. 105.

This approach to government clearly draws on the ideas of liberal economists such as Adam Smith. Foucault explained that, within such a governmental rationality of power,

it will be necessary to arouse, to facilitate, and to *laissez faire*, in other words to manage and no longer to control through rules and regulations. The essential objective of this management will be not so much to prevent things as to ensure that the necessary and natural regulations work, or even to create regulations that enable natural regulations to work. Natural phenomena will have to be framed in such a way that they do not veer off course, or in such a way that clumsy, arbitrary, and blind intervention does not make them veer off course. The fundamental objective of governmentality will be mechanisms of security, or let's say, it will be state intervention with the essential function of ensuring the security of the natural phenomena of economic processes or processes intrinsic to the population.<sup>82</sup>

This notion of *laissez faire* is predicated upon the liberal assumption that state power needs certain limitations. The spheres of both civil society and the economy are regarded as inherently self-governing and self-sustaining, and just need governmental oversight rather than direct intervention; this is the creation of 'regulations that enable natural regulations to work'. Thus a governmentality analysis draws attention to the establishment of the economy and civil society as autonomous spheres of self-government in modern forms of rule, beyond the necessity of direct and constant state intervention. At the heart of both these spheres is the modern, rational, free individual. Free citizens are thus vehicle for governmental forms of power; as Rose makes clear, "to govern is to presuppose the freedom of the governed."<sup>83</sup>

As such the extension of centralised sovereign state power directly over society and the economy is viewed as irrational within a governmental rationality of power, not because it is an abuse of power as such, but rather it is "ignorance of how to govern properly."<sup>84</sup> On these lines Hindess explains how the free market functions as a powerful metaphor for good government.

In Foucault's view, what particularly distinguishes liberalism from governmental rationalities of other kinds is its commitment to governing as far as possible through the promotion of certain kinds of free activity and the cultivation among the governed of suitable habits of self-regulation. According to this account, the image of the market is emblematic: it is seen by liberalism as a decentralised mechanism of government that operates at two rather different levels. At the first and most immediate level, individuals are thought to be governed, at least in part, by the

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid, p. 353.

<sup>83</sup> Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, p. 4. See also Rose and Miller, 'Political Power beyond the State', p. 179.

<sup>84</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 353; M. Dean, 'Liberal Government and Authoritarianism', *Economy and Society*, 31, 1, (2002), p. 41.



reactions of others with whom they interact and, at least among more civilised peoples, their interactions are normally expected to take a peaceful form – the market itself providing the most obvious example. ... Secondly, over the longer term, interaction with others is thought to influence the internal standards that individuals use to regulate their own behaviour – by affecting, for example, their sense of good and bad conduct, of what is acceptable or unacceptable in particular contexts, and so on.<sup>85</sup>

Similarly Graham Burchell notes that modern forms of governmentality are “a question of extending a model of rational economic conduct beyond the economy itself, of generalising it as a principle for both limiting and rationalising government activity.”<sup>86</sup>

As such the form of power Foucault identified as governmentality is closely linked to the emergence of neo-liberal political and economic philosophies in the late twentieth century. Both neo-liberal and governmental forms of power are wary of overly interventionist government, they both rely upon the rational self-government of individuals within a suitable framework, and they both support the extension of market principles to politics and civic life. As McCarthy and Prudham describe it, neo-liberalism is premised on extending the market as a governing principle for life, rolling-back the state, and on “shifts from binding to increasingly voluntarist, neo-corporatist regulatory frameworks involving non-binding standards and rules, public-private co-operation, self-regulation, and greater participation from citizen coalitions.”<sup>87</sup> This particular insertion of neo-liberalism within a governmental rationality of power is referred to here as advanced liberal governmentality. Thus advanced liberal government is not synonymous with neo-liberalism, since, as Dean notes, “while neo-liberalism might be characterised as the dominant contemporary rationality of government, it is found within a field of contestation in which there are multiple rationalities of government and a plurality of varieties of neo-liberalism.”<sup>88</sup> The broad field of modern rule across considerable swathes of the globe is characterised as advanced liberal government, within which competing neo-liberal, conservative, radical and communitarian rationalities co-exist.

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<sup>85</sup> B. Hindess, ‘Politics as Government: Michel Foucault’s Analysis of Political Reason’, *Alternatives*, 30, (2005), pp. 395 – 396.

<sup>86</sup> G. Burchell, ‘Liberal Government and Techniques of the Self’, in Barry *et al*, *Foucault and Political Reason*, p. 27.

<sup>87</sup> J. McCarthy and S. Prudham, ‘Neoliberal Nature and the Nature of Neoliberalism’, *Geoforum*, 35, (2004), p. 276.

<sup>88</sup> Dean, *Governmentality*, pp. 149 – 150.

The freedom of the economic sphere within advanced liberal forms of government is paralleled and mirrored by the freedom of civil society. Civil society is constructed through the empowerment of free, responsible and self-governing subjects at a distance from central institutions of rule. Subjects are produced who will live their lives according to the advice of doctors, social workers, teachers, psychologists, fertility experts and urban planners. Nikolas Rose describes how liberal rule relies upon “technologies of responsabilisation.”<sup>89</sup> Thus

to be free, in this modern sense, is to be attached to a polity whose certain civilised modes of conducting ones existence are identified as normal, and simultaneously to be bound to those ‘engineers of the human soul’ who will define the norm and tutor individuals as to the ways of living that will accomplish normality.<sup>90</sup>

In this respect, “power is not so much a matter of imposing constraints upon citizens as of ‘making up’ citizens capable of bearing a kind of regulated freedom.”<sup>91</sup>

One of the effects of a governmentality analysis is to highlight the constructed nature of the liberal division between the state and civil society. Much of political theory has relied on this separation, with states representing the public and political realm whilst civil society inhabits the private realm of voluntary association.<sup>92</sup> For Cohen and Arato civil society is a space of potentially “unconstrained discussion”, consensus and social justice.<sup>93</sup> Similarly John Keane has described global civil society as being non-governmental (i.e. non-state, for Keane, but including profit-seeking businesses, individuals, families, ethnic and religious identities) and marked by “civility” and “respect for others expressed as politeness towards and acceptance of strangers.”<sup>94</sup> On the other hand, a more critical, Gramscian perspective on civil society draws attention to how it can act as a bulwark for the state, as well as being the source of resistance.<sup>95</sup> As Robert Cox explains, “civil society, in Gramsci’s thinking, is the realm in which the existing social order is grounded; and it can also be

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<sup>89</sup> Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, p. 74.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, p. 76.

<sup>91</sup> Rose and Miller, ‘Political Power beyond the State’, p. 174. See also B. Cruickshank, *The Will to Empower: Democratic Citizens and Other Subjects*, (Ithaca; Cornell University Press, 1999).

<sup>92</sup> G. Baker, *Civil Society and Democratic Theory: Alternative Voices*, (London; Routledge, 2002), pp. 4 – 10; Cohen and Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, pp. viii – ix and 180 – 190; Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, pp. 61 – 63; T. Mitchell, ‘The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics’, *The American Political Science Review*, 85, 1, (1991), pp. 77 – 96.

<sup>93</sup> Cohen and Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, pp. ix – x and 355 – 362.

<sup>94</sup> J. Keane, *Global Civil Society?*, (Cambridge; CUP, 2003), pp. 3 – 17.

<sup>95</sup> N. Bobbio, ‘Gramsci and the Concept of Civil Society’, in J. Keane (ed.), *Civil Society and the State*, (London; Verso, 1988), pp. 73 – 99.

the realm in which a new social order can be founded.”<sup>96</sup> This perspective sees civil society as more contested, and less characterised by ‘civility’.

Further developing this Gramscian conception in which civil society is potentially inserted within hegemonic structures, a Foucauldian governmentality perspective shows how ‘government’ in the broadest sense is a function of multiple social actors, both state and non-state. It suggests that, rather than a unitary actor, ‘the state’ is actually a constellation of different governmental practices, technologies and sites.<sup>97</sup> Charities, trade unions, research institutes, schools, religious bodies, the print and broadcast media, industry regulators and so on all also govern through the conduct of conduct. ‘The state’ and ‘civil society’ are not therefore ontologically separate categories, but are the product of particular power relations. In modern forms of governmental power they are both agents of self-government and the government of others. As Rose and Miller explain,

diverse parts are played in technologies of rule by the political actors who hold elected office, make authoritative pronouncements as to policy and priorities, create legislation and get it enacted, calculate national budgets, raise taxes and adjust their levels and incidence, disburse benefits, give grants to industry and charities, command and direct bureaucratic staffs, set up regulatory bodies and organisations of all sorts, and, in certain cases, set in action the legitimate use of violence.<sup>98</sup>

Rather than a sovereign centre of power, a governmentality perspective draws attention to how government and the conduct of conduct is carried out at a distance by a multiplicity of actors transgressing conventional barriers such as state/non-state and international/domestic.

Given this orientation, a governmentality perspective is well-suited to capturing the complex heterogeneity of the ways rule is exercised in many post-colonial societies, despite its evolution within European political thought.<sup>99</sup> In much of the world the sovereign, centralised and impartial state is even more of an

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<sup>96</sup> R. W. Cox, ‘Civil Society at the Turn of the Millennium: Prospects for an Alternative World Order’, *Review of International Studies*, 25, (1999), p. 4.

<sup>97</sup> T. B. Hansen and F. Stepputat, ‘Introduction: States of Imagination’, in T. B. Hansen and F. Stepputat (eds.), *States of Imagination: Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), pp. 4 and 14.

<sup>98</sup> Rose and Miller, ‘Political Power beyond the State’, p. 189.

<sup>99</sup> P. Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); J. Ferguson and A. Gupta, ‘Spatializing States: Towards an Ethnography of Neoliberal Governmentality’, *American Ethnologist*, 29, 4, (2002), pp. 981 – 1002; D. Simon, ‘Rethinking (post)modernism, postcolonialism and posttraditionalism: South – North Perspectives’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 16, 2, (1998), p. 240.

abstraction than it is in Europe or North America, and rule is exercised through a diverse and transnational constellation of international donors, foreign banks, aid agencies, multinational corporations, local civic and church groups, elite patrons and state institutions.<sup>100</sup> In contemporary African politics, for example, Chabal and Daloz note the constant “interpenetration” or “straddling” of the state and civil society spheres, and Comaroff and Comaroff view any narrow, formal distinctions between state and society, private and public as “a cheerful illusion.”<sup>101</sup> As a result the governmentality perspective aptly captures the way in which, as Jean-François Bayart has noted,

the postcolonial state operates as a rhizome rather than a root system ... it is not one-dimensional, formed around a single genetic trunk ... It is rather an infinitely variable multiplicity of networks whose underground branches join together the scattered points of society.<sup>102</sup>

Similarly, in post-Apartheid South Africa Ran Greenstein explains that “the conflict between two mutually exclusive and internally homogeneous camps has given way to the interpenetration of partially opposing and partially collaborating forces, which are internally heterogeneous.”<sup>103</sup>

A governmentality perspective can also be applied to contemporary forms of power relations which extend beyond nation-state boundaries.<sup>104</sup> The conduct of conduct and rule through a diverse multiplicity of actors and sites is just as much a feature of global power relations as it is within the domestic realm; indeed a

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<sup>100</sup> J. Gould, ‘Poverty, Politics and States of Partnership’, in J. Gould (ed.), *The New Conditionality: The Politics of Poverty Reduction Strategies*, (London; Zed Books, 2005), pp. 8 – 10. James Ferguson also used the term governmentality to describe the operation of the development machine in Lesotho. However, by using it to imply “that the main features of economy and society must be within the control of a neutral, unitary and effective national government”, the meaning of governmentality is reduced to a narrowly statist one. Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*, p. 72. On the contrary, Foucault suggested that “maybe what is really important for our modernity – that is, for our present – is not the statization [*etatisation*] of society, as the ‘governmentalization’ of the state.” Foucault, ‘Governmentality’, p. 220.

<sup>101</sup> P. Chabal and J.-P. Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*, (Oxford; James Currey, 1999), p. 17; J. L. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, ‘Introduction’, in J. L. Comaroff and J. Comaroff (eds.), *Civil Society and the Political Imagination in Africa: Critical Perspectives*, (Chicago; University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 24.

<sup>102</sup> J.-F. Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly*, (London; Longman, 1993), p. 220.

<sup>103</sup> R. Greenstein, *State, Civil Society and the Reconfiguration of Power in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, (Durban; CCS and UKZN, 2003), p. 17. See also M. Neocosmos, ‘Rethinking Politics in Southern Africa Today: Elements of a Critique of Political Liberalism’, in N. C. Gibson (ed.), *Challenging Hegemony: Social Movements and the Quest for a New Humanism in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, (Trenton NJ; Africa World Press, 2006), p. 63.

<sup>104</sup> Hindess, ‘Politics as Government’, pp. 405 – 409; Rose and Miller, ‘Political Power beyond the State’, p. 178.

governmentality perspective throws such distinctions between national and international into question.<sup>105</sup> A developing field of study has thus taken up Wendy Larner and William Walters' "challenge of relating governmentality to the international, the global and the supra-national."<sup>106</sup> Examples of detailed studies include analyses of how governance is exercised by and through actors including international institutions like the UN, World Trade Organisation (WTO), World Bank, and International Monetary Fund, international NGOs and social movements, states with varying capacities, regional organisations, scientific bodies, transnational businesses and industry bodies and so on, as well as through discourses of corporate social responsibility, humanitarian intervention, democracy and 'good governance', and international partnerships.<sup>107</sup>

This orientation towards global governmentality has much in common with the larger field of 'global governance' studies.<sup>108</sup> According to Dingwerth and Pattberg, "the study of global governance acknowledges that a plethora of forms of social organisation and political decision-making exist that are neither directed toward the state nor emanate from it", and that "local, national, regional, and global political processes are inseparably linked."<sup>109</sup> Foundationally in this field James Rosenau famously described these new patterns of global rule as "governance without

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<sup>105</sup> Of course, many other perspectives and approaches have also questioned the assumption of a 'great divide' between the domestic and the international on which traditional International Relations scholarship has been based. See, for example, I. Clark, *Globalization and International Relations Theory*, (Oxford; OUP, 1999); and Walker, *Inside/Outside*.

<sup>106</sup> W. Larner and W. Walters, 'Introduction', in W. Larner and W. Walters (eds.), *Global Governmentality: Governing International Spaces*, (London; Routledge, 2004), p. 1.

<sup>107</sup> R. Abrahamsen, 'The Power of Partnerships in Global Governance', *Third World Quarterly*, 25, 8, (2004), pp. 1453 – 1467; L. Amoore and P. Langley, 'Global Civil Society and Global Governmentality', in R. D. Germain and M. Kenny (eds.), *The Idea of Global Civil Society: Politics and Ethics in a Globalizing Era*, (Abingdon; Routledge, 2005), pp. 137 – 155; M. Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security*, (London; Zed Books, 2001); R. D. Lipschutz with J. K. Rowe, *Globalization, Governmentality and Global Politics: Regulation for the rest of us?*, (London; Routledge, 2005); M. Merlingen, 'Governmentality: Toward a Foucauldian Framework for the Study of IGOs', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 38, 4, (2003), pp. 361 – 384; O. J. Sending and I. B. Neumann, 'Governance to Governmentality: Analysing NGOs, States and Power', *International Studies Quarterly*, 50, (2006), pp. 651 – 672; and L. Zanotti, 'Governmentalizing the post-Cold War International Regime: The UN Debate on Democratization and Good Governance', *Alternatives*, 30, (2005), pp. 461 – 487.

<sup>108</sup> There is a massive and diverse body of literature on 'global governance', and perspectives range from those who regard state sovereignty as being eroded by NGOs and TNCs through to neo-Gramscian assessments of how NGOs work to bolster the state-based capitalist system. For a selection see Dingwerth and Pattberg, 'Global Governance as a Perspective on World Politics'; R. Falkner, 'Private Environmental Governance and International Relations: Exploring the Links', *Global Environmental Politics*, 3, 2, (2003), pp. 72 – 87; Foreman and Segaar, 'New Coalitions for Global Governance'; Held and McGrew, *Governing Globalization*; O'Brien *et al*, *Contesting Global Governance*; Rosenau, 'Governance in the Twenty-First Century'.

<sup>109</sup> Dingwerth and Pattberg, 'Global Governance as a Perspective on World Politics', pp. 191 – 192.

government.”<sup>110</sup> According to Rosenau, the rise of non-state actors and transnational issues such as globalised finance and environmental degradation has diminished the governance capacities of nation-states.<sup>111</sup> An increased role for NGOs or transnational corporations is regarded as a loss of power or erosion of state sovereignty. Nation-states are now rarely, it is claimed, the final arbiters of global politics.<sup>112</sup>

Yet the global governance literature has tended to inadequately address the role of power in international politics, either ignoring it or reducing power to a zero-sum struggle between states and non-state actors for material resources or sovereign authority.<sup>113</sup> Sending and Neumann identify three further limitations of the global governance literature which a governmentality perspective can help address. First, they argue that “while the literature on global governance highlights governance as a set of interrelated processes, it does not provide the analytical tools to study these processes.”<sup>114</sup> Studies of global governance tend to focus on institutions and their legitimacy and authority, whilst

the concept of governmentality is aimed at investigating the practices of governing as an empirical phenomenon but also to identify the ‘mentality’ – the rationality characteristic of the systematic thinking, reflection, and knowledge that is integral to different modes of governing.<sup>115</sup>

Secondly, whereas the global governance literature frequently suggests that global politics is characterised by a “zero-sum conception of power where an increase in the power and influence of nonstate actors is *ipso facto* defined as a simultaneous reduction in state power and authority”, a governmentality perspective instead sees a “changing logic or rationality of government (defined as a type of power) by which civil society is redefined from a passive object of government to be acted upon and into an entity that is both an object and a subject of government.”<sup>116</sup> Thirdly, most studies of global governance remain paradoxically trapped in the state-centric framework they are attempting to escape. As Sending and Neumann note,

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<sup>110</sup> Rosenau, ‘Governance in the Twenty-First Century’, p. 15. Other oft-deployed terms include “complex multilateralism” and “new medievalism”. See Clark, *Globalization and International Relations Theory*, p. 43; and Cox, ‘Civil Society at the Turn of the Millennium’, p. 12.

<sup>111</sup> Rosenau, ‘Governance in the Twenty-First Century’, p. 19.

<sup>112</sup> Dunn, *The Lure of Summitry*, p. 33; G. Prins, ‘Politics and the Environment’, *International Affairs*, 66, 4, (1990), p. 722; Rosenau, ‘Governance in the Twenty-First Century’.

<sup>113</sup> M. Barnett and R. Duvall, ‘Power in global governance’, in M. Barnett and R. Duvall (eds.), *Power in Global Governance*, (Cambridge; CUP, 2005), p. 2.

<sup>114</sup> Sending and Neumann, ‘Governance to Governmentality’, p. 652.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 657.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 652.

by tying the analysis of the processes of governance to a concern with authority, studies of global governance inadvertently perpetuate the very state-centric framework that they seek to transcend: the focus is negatively defined in relation to sovereignty, aimed at analyzing to which actors power and authority have flowed from the state. The more recent interest in how to render global governance more legitimate and accountable is a testament to this feature of studies of global governance.<sup>117</sup>

Whilst also concerned with non-state actors and their insertion in global power relations, a governmentality perspective seeks to understand power as working through a plurality of mechanisms of facilitating the conduct of conduct which do not necessarily remain tied to (or opposed to) the state, or to state-centric notions of authority and legitimacy.

Overall therefore, a governmentality perspective encourages us to dissolve the fundamental binaries that have structured the way we think about politics and rule: “state and civil society, economy and family, public and private, coercion and freedom.”<sup>118</sup> To this list we can add the analytical separation between ‘the international’ and ‘the domestic’. The mechanisms of rule in modern global politics transgress these boundaries, and multiple actors in a plurality of spaces are implicated in the conduct of conduct.

### ***Summitry***

A global summit like the WSSD may appear an unusual focus for a Foucauldian approach, which often focuses on the micro-political exercise of capillary power through decentralised sites. A conventional interpretation of summitry is that it represents a sovereign form of government in which states meet at the highest level to agree on the laws and regulations that will dictate the direction of international politics, and conflicts are played out between ‘billiard-ball’ states

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid, p. 655. Further discussions of the differences between ‘global governance’ and ‘global governmentality’ perspectives are contained in Larner and Walters, ‘Introduction’, pp. 16 – 17; and Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, p. 19.

<sup>118</sup> Barry *et al*, ‘Introduction’, p. 2. See also A. Mbembe, ‘Provisional Notes on the Postcolony’, *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 62, 1, (1992), p. 3.

arranged in broad alliances of East against West or North against South.<sup>119</sup> State-centric International Relations perspectives and diplomatic histories tend to regard summits as continued evidence of the determining role of ‘great men’ and major states in international politics.<sup>120</sup> Talk of diplomatic “two-level games” and multiple boards may seem to blur boundaries between the international and the domestic, but as Ian Clark has argued, these analyses remain “very much at the level of mutual influence between the two domains which remain separable in theory, even if not always separate in practice.”<sup>121</sup> As a discipline International Relations has had, as Roland Bleiker notes, a “masculine preoccupation with big and heroic events: wars, revolutions, diplomatic summits and other state actions that are imbued with international significance.”<sup>122</sup> Such scholarship is informed by what Rob Walker describes as “discursive economies of scale that inform our understanding of what and where power is.”<sup>123</sup> Despite the claims of the global governance literature that international politics is no longer primarily determined by heads-of-state, many accounts of summits continue to view them as where “skilled and self-assured men” have “climbed high and dangerously in the belief that at the summit they can change the world.”<sup>124</sup>

By approaching summits from a Foucauldian governmentality perspective it is possible highlight new ways of understanding multilateral diplomacy as one set of techniques among many in global patterns of advanced liberal government. Through their participation in summits new assemblages of actors have been empowered and produced as agents of both self-government and the government of others. Sovereign and disciplinary forms of power have been recast and mobilised at the summit in the service of governmental rationalities. Summits therefore function as a crucial technique of enabling ‘rule at a distance’ in forms of global advanced liberal

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<sup>119</sup> Brenton, *The Greening of Machiavelli*; J. Eckl and R. Weber, ‘North – South? Pitfalls of Dividing the World by Words’, *Third World Quarterly*, 28, 1, (2007), pp. 3 – 23; Fomerand, ‘UN Conferences’; J. Hoffman, ‘Reconstructing Diplomacy’, *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 5, 4, (2003), p. 525; R. D. Putnam and N. Bayne, *Hanging Together: Cooperation and Conflict in the Seven-Power Summits*, (London; Sage, 1987); P. Sharp, ‘For Diplomacy: Representation and the Study of International Relations’, *International Studies Review*, 1, 1, (1999), pp. 33 – 34; G. Sjostedt (ed.), *International Environmental Negotiation*, (London; Sage, 1993); C. Thomas, ‘Geopolitical Landscapes: Where is the Third World Now?’, *Review of International Studies*, 25, (1999), pp. 225 – 244.

<sup>120</sup> Reynolds, *Summits*, p. 5.

<sup>121</sup> Clark, *Globalization and International Relations Theory*, p. 28. For an account of two-level games and the interaction of the international and domestic, see Putnam, ‘Diplomacy and Domestic Politics’.

<sup>122</sup> Bleiker, ‘The Aesthetic Turn in International Political Theory’, p. 516.

<sup>123</sup> R. B. J. Walker, ‘Social Movements/World Politics’, *Millennium*, 23, 3, (1994), p. 669.

<sup>124</sup> Reynolds, *Summits*, p. 10.



government. As well as their traditional role of agreeing new treaties and conventions summits are moments of political theatre, and provide a stage on which the principal actors of world politics can perform their roles, and certain norms, standards and examples are conveyed to a wider audience. Summits are attempts to govern the conduct of conduct in global politics, through the example they set and the techniques of rule at a distance they establish.

The importance of theatrical and symbolic forms of power was famously conveyed by Clifford Geertz in his classic study of the theatre-state in nineteenth century Bali, in which he describes how the royal court – the *Negara* – functioned as an “exemplary centre” of theatrical ritual and symbolism.<sup>125</sup> Court life was centred on pageantry and pomp, and these “were not means to political ends: they were the ends themselves, they were what the state was for.”<sup>126</sup> Thus

the state ceremonials of classical Bali were metaphysical theatre: theatre designed to express a view of the ultimate nature of reality and, at the same time, to shape the existing conditions of life to be consonant with that reality; that is, theatre to present an ontology and, by presenting it, to make it happen – make it actual.<sup>127</sup>

Geertz’ study draws attention to facets of power and statecraft that are often ignored or marginalised in contemporary political analysis, such as the ways in which “statecraft is a thespian art.”<sup>128</sup> He argues that *status* and *stateliness* are just as important facets of the state as commanding and administering, and it is mistaken to dismiss such features as mere “artifices, more or less cunning, more or less illusional, designed to facilitate the prosier aims of power.”<sup>129</sup> His famous conclusion was therefore that the “dramas of the theatre state, mimetic of themselves, were, in the end, neither illusions nor lies, neither sleight of hand nor make-believe. They were what there was.”<sup>130</sup>

As this nineteenth century example shows, the symbolic and theatrical dimensions of politics are neither unique to advanced liberal government nor to modern summitry. The political importance of ritual, performance and ceremony has been discussed by theorists such as Raymond Cohen, who noted how “international

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<sup>125</sup> Geertz, *Negara*, p. 13.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. See also Hansen and Stepputat, ‘Introduction’, p. 15.

<sup>127</sup> Geertz, *Negara*, p. 104.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, p. 120.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, p. 122.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid, p. 136.

politics is increasingly being conducted on a great stage, as it were, under the eyes of a watchful audience.”<sup>131</sup> Murray Edelman famously argued that “the most conspicuously ‘democratic’ institutions are largely symbolic and expressive in function”, and that “decision-making at the highest levels is not so much literal policy-making as dramaturgy.”<sup>132</sup> For Edelman symbolic politics serves to promote political quiescence and stability, and he argued that “voting may be the most fundamental of all devices for reassuring masses that they are participants in the making of public policy.”<sup>133</sup> This approach to political theatre and symbolism rests upon a distinction between ‘real politics’ and illusionary ritual.<sup>134</sup>

In contrast, recent discussions of sustainable development and ‘post-ecologism’ have drawn attention to different ways of understanding symbolic politics.<sup>135</sup> Blühdorn has stressed that “that the common distinction between symbolic politics that is staged for the media and real politics that brokers hard interests behind closed doors is too simplistic.”<sup>136</sup> The performative dimension of politics, and the symbolism and dramaturgy of diplomacy, can be understood not as illusions or masks for power but as actually reifying particular subjectivities and relationships. Costas Constantinou echoes Geertz when he observes that “the fictions and the dramas of diplomacy never end ... they become the world of diplomacy, they are what there is.”<sup>137</sup>

From a governmentality perspective the symbolic, theatrical and exemplary dimensions of the WSSD can be interpreted as techniques and technologies of advanced liberal government. Through international summit diplomacy particular roles are diligently performed on a carefully constructed and choreographed stage to a specific audience. The performance of a certain type of conduct worked to govern the conduct of other watching actors at a distance. The exemplary governmentality of the

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<sup>131</sup> R. Cohen, *Theatre of Power: The Art of Diplomatic Signalling*, (London; Longman, 1987), p. 224.

<sup>132</sup> M. Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, (Chicago; University of Illinois Press, 1964), pp. 19 and 78.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, p. 190.

<sup>134</sup> For a critique of this distinction in Edelman’s work see I. Blühdorn, ‘Sustaining the Unsustainable: Symbolic Politics and the Politics of Simulation’, *Environmental Politics*, 16, 2, (2007), pp. 257 – 260.

<sup>135</sup> S. Baker, ‘Sustainable Development as Symbolic Commitment: Declaratory Politics and the Seductive Appeal of Ecological Modernisation in the European Union’, *Environmental Politics*, 16, 2, (2007), pp. 297 – 317; Blühdorn, ‘Sustaining the unsustainable’; Blühdorn and Welsh, ‘Eco-Politics Beyond the Paradigm of Sustainability’; M. A. Hajer, ‘Setting the Stage: A Dramaturgy of Policy Deliberation’, *Administration and Society*, 36, 6, (2005), pp. 624 – 647.

<sup>136</sup> Blühdorn, ‘Sustaining the Unsustainable’, p. 254.

<sup>137</sup> C. M. Constantinou, *On the Way to Diplomacy*, (Minneapolis; University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 103.

WSSD was thus more about communicating an inspirational model of sustainable politics that would be copied by free and responsible subjects, rather than law-giving or treaty-making forms of power. As such, summits function as ‘exemplary centres’; by acting as an ideal model for the conduct of international society they are, like Geertz’ Balinese court, “an illustration of the power of grandeur to organize the world.”<sup>138</sup>

One of the ways in which summits work to govern and order global politics is by reifying those who participate in them and establishing their primacy as political actors. The performativity of diplomatic exchange works to constitute and produce international actors. As Adam Watson observes, a fundamental characteristic of nation-states, and indeed the states system, is that states “are not content merely to observe one another at a distance. They feel the need to enter into dialogue with one another.”<sup>139</sup> Thus it is “the ability to deal with other states, and therefore to conduct a dialogue with them, [which lies at] the very heart of ‘sovereignty’.”<sup>140</sup> Constantinou stresses the inter-subjectivity of diplomacy, “in the sense that the diplomatic process takes place between two constructed subjects whose very construction relies on the intercourse and mutual recognition of diplomacy.”<sup>141</sup> It is at least partially through participating and communicating in international events like summits that organisations – and not just states, but also international institutions, agencies, and NGOs – are actually constituted as political actors.<sup>142</sup> The importance and primacy of those who perform on the summit stage is asserted through hierarchical metaphors of politics: the summit is represented as where power is located; above the heads of most and where only the brightest and the best are capable of accessing it.<sup>143</sup> Thus David Dunn’s definition of a summit is “diplomacy at the highest level.”<sup>144</sup> As Constantinou suggests,

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<sup>138</sup> Geertz, *Negara*, p. 102.

<sup>139</sup> A. Watson, *Diplomacy: The Dialogue Between States*, (London; Routledge, 1984), p. 14.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid*, p. 15.

<sup>141</sup> C. Constantinou, ‘Diplomatic Representation ... or Who Framed the Ambassadors?’, *Millennium*, 23, 1, (1994), p. 23.

<sup>142</sup> In a similar way Judith Butler has drawn attention to “the performative status of the natural itself” in the construction of gender. J. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (London; Routledge, 1990), p. 146.

<sup>143</sup> C. M. Constantinou, ‘Before the Summit: Representations of Sovereignty on the Himalayas’, *Millennium*, 27, 1, (1998), pp. 23 – 53.

<sup>144</sup> Dunn, *The Lure of Summitry*, p. 16.

this metaphor fosters conventional ways of ordering the world, celebrates hierarchy and works to shape the global imaginary by recollecting popular stories or images of mountaineering, of high or noble objective, or control, of progress, of fortitude, and of human mastery.<sup>145</sup>

The summit is constructed as the source of guidance and security. As Winston Churchill asked the British House of Commons in 1953, “if there is not at the summit of the nations the wish to win the greatest prize of peace, where can men look for hope?”<sup>146</sup>

Summits also work to create the impression that they are somehow ‘above’ normal politics, and that they represent a domain where everyday rivalries and differences can be put aside in the interests of common humanity.<sup>147</sup> Through countless rituals, symbols and ceremonies summits produce a space within which ‘high politics’ can be pursued. Symbolically, the pole held aloft by Sherpa Tenzing Norgay at the summit of Everest in 1953 displayed the flags of the UN, Great Britain, Nepal and India, in that order. He later said he was “glad the UN flag was on top. For I like to think that our victory was not just for ourselves – not only for our own nations – but for all men everywhere.”<sup>148</sup> The idea that the UN can rise above the political intrigues of states, and that the summit represents a place above the normal run of events where the interests of all mankind can be reconciled, are both themes central to the way summits conduct global politics.

Approaching summits in terms of political theatre should not imply that they are ephemeral diversions or unimportant spectacles. Often, calling something a performance or piece of theatre implies that it is merely aesthetic and has no connection to reality, or that it serves to mask or draw attention away from ‘reality’.<sup>149</sup> This is not the sense in which the theatrical metaphor is used here, since it relies upon

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<sup>145</sup> Constantinou, ‘Before the Summit’, p. 24.

<sup>146</sup> Quoted in Dunn, *The Lure of Summitry*, p. 2.

<sup>147</sup> This political invocation of scale and hierarchy works in a similar way to that discussed by Ferguson and Gupta when they explore how states have claimed “superior spatial scope, supremacy in a hierarchy of power, and greater generality of interest and moral purpose” through discourses of “vertical encompassment”. Ferguson and Gupta, ‘Spatializing States’, p. 995.

<sup>148</sup> Quoted in Constantinou, ‘Before the Summit’, p. 25.

<sup>149</sup> This seems to be the implication of Peter Doran’s use of “spectacle” to describe the Earth Summit, which he sees as “the latest chapter in a story of denial.” Doran, ‘The Earth Summit’, p. 55. See also M. Paterson, *Understanding Global Environmental Politics: Domination, Accumulation, Resistance*, (London; Macmillan, 2000), p. 2. Keil and Debbané record the argument that “the WSSD was a grand spectacle to legitimize the neo-liberal ideologies of the hegemonic structures of power and to preserve the existing social order of ecological plundering and social injustice.” R. Keil and A.-M. Debbané, ‘Scaling Discourse Analysis: Experiences from Hermanus, South Africa and Walvis Bay, Namibia’, *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning*, 7, 3, (2005), pp. 272 – 273.

a distinction between representation and reality that a post-positivist Foucauldian approach throws into question. By viewing summits as examples of political theatre, attention is focussed on the rituals, symbols, role-playing and pageantry that they involve. These things are not disguises or distractions from ‘the reality of power’, but rather they actually constitute an important technique for the exercise of rule in advanced liberal government.<sup>150</sup>

### ***Resistance***

Summits are thus a key technique of advanced liberal government. Yet they are also important potential moments of political resistance. Indeed, since at least ‘the Battle for Seattle’ in 1999 global summits have become one of the quintessential sites for protest politics.<sup>151</sup> The Johannesburg Summit had its own protestors on the streets condemning ‘the W\$\$D’ and the South African government. Such forms of resistance are often conceptualised as a denial of power, an assertion of freedom, or a refusal of government. In contrast, a Foucauldian approach to governmentality suggests that in modes of advanced liberal rule the lines between power and freedom, state and society, and domination and resistance are thrown into question. Rather than power being opposed by freedom, governmentality works through processes of freedom. Such an approach problematises not only how we think of power and government, but also how we think about political resistance at moments like the WSSD.

Most attempts to think about resistance have been predicated upon a binary between the rulers and ruled, the strong and the weak. Within the Marxist tradition resistance has been primarily located in the poor, the working class, the ruled and the governed, who have opposed power through revolutions, counter-hegemonic

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<sup>150</sup> In a similar way, although in a rather different context, Achille Mbembe has drawn attention to the ways that postcolonial rule in Africa operates through the “grotesque” and the “obscene”, where the state rules by “dramatizing its own magnificence”, organizing “ceremonial displays through which it makes manifest its majesty”, and creating “spectacles” for its subjects to watch. According to Mbembe, these are also the forms which popular resistance takes. A. Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, (Berkeley; University of California Press, 2001), p. 104.

<sup>151</sup> Lipschutz, *Globalization, Governmentality and Global Politics*, p. 1; M. Pianta, ‘Parallel Summits of Global Civil Society’, in H. Anheier, M. Glasius and M. Kaldor (eds.), *Global Civil Society 2001*, (Oxford; OUP, 2001), p. 177.

struggles, or myriad acts of foot-dragging opposition.<sup>152</sup> Social movement theory has attempted to understand how such resistance movements have emerged, under what conditions they have been successful, and what effects they have had.<sup>153</sup> Building on such traditions, postcolonial political theory has tended to look for resistance in the global South and the ‘subaltern’.<sup>154</sup> More recently there has been a wave of interest in the so-called ‘new social movements’, groups who fit uneasily into the category of working class or liberation movements, but whose varied forms of resistance invoke identity, sexuality, cultural, religious or ecological struggles. Drawing inspiration from the anti-WTO protests in Seattle in 1999 and movements like the Zapatistas in Mexico, many of these groups have linked up in broad global networks as elements of an “anti-globalisation movement” or global justice movement.<sup>155</sup> These accounts stress the diversity, trans-nationalism, network and “rhizome” structures and “carnavalesque” elements of the new social movements.<sup>156</sup> However, in general such accounts of resistance have continued to rely on the binary between power and freedom, ruler and ruled that has structured conventional political thought.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> A. Bayat, ‘Un-civil Society: The Politics of the “Informal People”’, *Third World Quarterly*, 18, 1, (1997), pp. 53 – 72; J. H. Mittelman, ‘Globalisation and Environmental Resistance Politics’, *Third World Quarterly*, 19, 5, (1998), pp. 847 – 872; J. C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, (New Haven; Yale University Press, 1990); J. C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, (New Haven; Yale University Press, 1985).

<sup>153</sup> This literature is too diverse and substantial to be adequately engaged with here – for overviews and introductions see Cohen and Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, p. 493; D. Della Porta and M. Diana, *Social Movements: An Introduction*, (Oxford; Blackwell, 1999); D. McAdam, J. D. McCarthy and M. N. Zald (eds.), *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, (Cambridge; CUP, 1996); S. Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, (Cambridge; CUP, 1998); and C. Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, (New York; Random House, 1978).

<sup>154</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p. 335; G. C. Spivak, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’, in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, (Urbana; University of Illinois, 1988), pp. 271 – 313; Young, *Postcolonialism*, pp. 8 – 9.

<sup>155</sup> S. Aronowitz and H. Gautney (eds.), *Implicating Empire: Globalization and Resistance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century World Order*, (New York; Basic Books, 2003); R. Ballard, A. Habib and I. Valodia (eds.), *Voices of Protest: Social Movements in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, (Scottsville; UKZN Press, 2006); Bond, *Unsustainable South Africa*; A. Desai, *We Are The Poors: Community Struggles in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, (New York; Monthly Review Press, 2002); A. Escobar, ‘Beyond the Third World: Imperial Globality, Global Coloniality, and Anti-Globalisation Social Movements’, *Third World Quarterly*, 25, 1, (2004), pp. 207 – 230; Gibson, *Challenging Hegemony*; M. Hardt and A. Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, (New York; Penguin, 2004); P. Kingsnorth, *One No, Many Yeses: A Journey to the Heart of the Global Resistance Movement*, (London; The Free Press, 2004); Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, pp. 87 and 159; Notes from Nowhere (ed.), *We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global AntiCapitalism*, (London; Verso, 2003).

<sup>156</sup> Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, p. 211.

<sup>157</sup> An interesting and provocative alternative view of social movements as performative attempts by individuals to persuade themselves that political agency is possible is posited by Blühdorn. “From this perspective, the significance of social movement politics lies not so much in the demonstration of protest and opposition for the purpose of political change, but in the demonstration, performance and

A Foucauldian governmentality perspective destabilises these binaries. Foucault was sceptical of the idea that a ‘pure’ form of resistance against power could exist, or that there was a theoretical basis for the notion of complete liberation. In one of his later essays he reflected that

I have always been somewhat suspicious of the notion of liberation, because if it is not treated with precautions and with certain limits, one runs the risk of falling back on the idea that there exists a human nature or base that, as a consequence of certain historical, economic, and social processes, has been concealed, alienated, or imprisoned in and by mechanisms of repression.<sup>158</sup>

Emancipatory projects have no place therefore within a Foucauldian approach; however, this does not mean that he believed resistance was impossible. On the contrary he was very clear that “where there is power, there is resistance.”<sup>159</sup> Indeed, “there is no power without potential refusal or revolt.”<sup>160</sup> However, “these points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network. Hence there is no single locus of great refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary.”<sup>161</sup> This desire to get away from a binary view of politics as either domination or resistance reflects the messiness and complexity of contemporary politics. For example, in Sending and Neumann’s study of Norwegian policy-formulation on land mines, NGOs conceded that “we were opponents and collaborators at the same time.”<sup>162</sup> Amore and Langley discuss the contradictions and ironies thrown up by video footage of a Seattle ‘anti-globalisation’ protestor kicking a Nike sign whilst wearing Nike shoes.<sup>163</sup> Rather than seeing these as anomalies or lamentable lapses from ‘pure resistance’, a Foucauldian perspective recognises they reflect the inevitably compromised status of resistance in assemblages of rule where government works through freedom and at a distance.

Instead of searching for grand acts of ‘essential’ or revolutionary resistance therefore, a study of technologies of governmentality draws attention to the way the

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experience of something that is desperately needed in the late-modern condition but that has no place in the established socio-economic system: autonomy, identity, and agency.” I. Blühdorn, ‘Self-Experience in the Theme Park of Radical Action? Social Movements and Political Articulation in the Late-Modern Condition’, *European Journal of Social Theory*, 9, 1, (2006), p. 36.

<sup>158</sup> M. Foucault, ‘On the Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom’, in *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*, p. 282.

<sup>159</sup> Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, p. 95.

<sup>160</sup> Foucault, ‘Omnes et Singulatim’, p. 324.

<sup>161</sup> Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, pp. 95 – 96.

<sup>162</sup> Sending and Neumann, ‘Governance to Governmentality’, p. 666.

<sup>163</sup> Amore and Langley, ‘Global Civil Society and Global Governmentality’, p. 152.

practices of NGOs, social movements and even states are simultaneously both expressions of power *and* of resistance. Discourses produce power relationships, but they are also the means through which dominant power relationships can be resisted and subverted. As Foucault explains, “discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile, and makes it possible to thwart it.”<sup>164</sup> Power and resistance are thus inseparable, and they often mobilise the same forms, strategies and technologies on the field of power relations.

In one of his lectures in the series ‘Security, Territory, Population’ at the Collège de France in 1978 Foucault discussed how we might describe resistance to processes of governmentality.<sup>165</sup> He considers and rejects terming them “revolts” (too precise and too strong); “disobedience” (too weak); “insubordination” (perhaps, but linked to the military); and “dissidence” (very close, but too associated with Soviet dissidents).<sup>166</sup> Eventually he fixes on the term “counter-conduct”: a “struggle against the processes implemented for conducting others.”<sup>167</sup> Foucault observed how, in the explosion of concern with the art of government in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, there was an accompanying rise of concern over ‘how not to be governed’.

I do not mean by that that governmentalisation would be opposed by a kind of face-off by the opposite affirmation, ‘we do not want to be governed and we do not want to be governed at all.’ I mean that, in this great preoccupation about the way to govern and the search for the ways to govern, we identify a perpetual question which would be: ‘how not to be governed *like that*, by that, in the name of those principles, with such and such an objective in mind and by means of such procedures, not like that, not for that, not by them.’<sup>168</sup>

This is “the art of not being governed quite so much”, or “the will not to be governed thusly, like that, by these people, at this price.”<sup>169</sup>

As he makes clear however, such counter-conducts rely upon and are even implicated in the strategies, techniques and power relationships they oppose.<sup>170</sup> Thus the task of mapping acts of resistance involves demonstrating how the fields of visibility established by certain discourses are compromised or reinforced, how forms

<sup>164</sup> Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, p. 101.

<sup>165</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, lecture on 1 March 1978.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201.

<sup>168</sup> M. Foucault, ‘What is Critique’, in M. Foucault, *The Politics of Truth*, (ed. S. Lotringer, tr. L. Hochroth and C. Porter), (Los Angeles; Semiotext(e), 2007), p. 44.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 45 and 75.

<sup>170</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 215.



of knowledge are challenged or legitimised, how particular techniques are discarded or merely reversed, and how identities are subverted, re-appropriated and inverted.

This focus on the links between conduct and counter-conduct reminds us that government always has gaps, fractures and inconsistencies. Discourses are never entirely hegemonic or impenetrable, and forms of government can be subverted, evaded or mocked. Indeed, advanced liberal government is predicated on the freedom of citizens to question and dissent – although they are encouraged to act responsibly, rationally and productively. Paradoxically however, this reliance of forms of advanced liberal government upon practices of freedom means that assertions of that freedom – through the right to protest, resist and dissent – can end up reinforcing as well as challenging the system.

This interaction between the extension of government through freedom and at a distance, and practices of counter-conduct, is at the heart of modern forms of rule. A Foucauldian governmentality perspective demands paying serious attention to the way forms of government are challenged and resisted. As Walker wryly observes, “from the regal heights of statecraft, social movements are but mosquitoes on the evening breeze, irritants to those who claim maturity and legitimacy at the centre of political life.”<sup>171</sup> This was certainly the view of many at the WSSD, who viewed the protestors as troublemakers and as a distraction. However, by regarding these protests as counter-conducts they form a necessary corollary to sustainable development and summit forms of government and, as Walker recognises, they present “challenges to established accounts of where and what politics must be.”<sup>172</sup>

### ***Analytics, ethics and politics***

In this thesis the concepts of power/knowledge, discourse, government and resistance constitute the major theoretical referents for approaching the political effects of sustainable development and the WSSD. These concepts can be combined in an analytical framework for studying formations of power, rule and government, based around Dean’s “analytics of government”, which “takes as its central concern

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<sup>171</sup> Walker, ‘Social Movements/World Politics’, p. 669.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid, p. 678.

how we govern and are governed within different regimes, and the conditions under which such regimes emerge, continue to operate, and are transformed.”<sup>173</sup> He draws attention to four dimensions of government: the fields of visibility it creates and the ends to which it aims; the forms of knowledge it draws upon; the particular technologies and apparatuses it governs through; and the subjectivities or identities it produces.<sup>174</sup> These dimensions are present within every regime of government, and each “presupposes the other without being reducible to them.”<sup>175</sup> This framework enables the comparison of different rationalities of rule and resistance, including those which rely more upon sovereign or disciplinary forms of power as well as techniques of advanced liberal government.

First, “to govern, it is necessary to render visible the space over which government is to be exercised”, and to conceptualise the ends of government.<sup>176</sup> Governing thus depends on the production of an intelligible field, and this produces particular political effects since when mapping “salient features are identified and non-salient features rendered invisible.”<sup>177</sup> Whereas sovereign or princely forms of power ruled territory, the new forms of power analysed by Foucault sought to regulate and order individual human bodies (disciplinary power) or the population as a totality (bio-power).<sup>178</sup> The population has remained the field of visibility for modern rationalities of government, and its health, wealth and security are the ends for which government exists.<sup>179</sup> However, which population is envisaged, which aspects are to be governed, and how these aspects relate to other fields of visibility are all important questions for understanding how particular regimes of government operate.

Secondly, in order to know and govern these fields, specific regimes and ensembles of knowledge are invoked. An analysis of these forms of knowledge involves asking “what forms of thought, knowledge, expertise, strategies, means of calculation, or rationality are employed in these practices of governing?”<sup>180</sup> Foucault drew attention to the way that from the sixteenth century the development of statistics – literally the “science of the state” – enabled the population to be known, rendered

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<sup>173</sup> Dean, *Governmentality*, p. 20. Emphasis in original.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, p. 36.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 11; Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, pp. 242 – 243.

<sup>179</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 105.

<sup>180</sup> Dean, *Governmentality*, p. 31.

intelligible and brought into being as an object of government.<sup>181</sup> As Rose and Miller note, “government has inaugurated a huge labour of enquiry to transform events and phenomena into information: births, illnesses and deaths, marriages and divorces, levels of income and types of diet, forms of employment and want of employment.”<sup>182</sup> Other forms of knowledge are also central to ensuring the health, wealth and security of the population: medicine, epidemiology, criminology, economics, urban planning, social insurance, the law, public relations and many others. The key insight here is that government is “rational and thoughtful activity” and that particular governmental rationalities rely upon, and construct as authoritative, particular forms of knowledge.<sup>183</sup>

Thirdly, government relies upon particular practices, techniques, technologies, apparatuses and programmes, and an analytics of government involves asking “by what means, mechanisms, procedures, instruments, tactics, techniques, technologies and vocabularies is authority constituted and rule accomplished?”<sup>184</sup> Whilst this does not seek to reduce government purely to a functionalist or technical operation, it does emphasise the degree to which government is not simply a manifestation of ideologies, concepts or worldviews. Forms of government rely upon techniques such as tax returns, registers of property, electoral rolls, and censuses in order to provide the data for constituting the population, and technologies such as hospitals, schools, prisons, social welfare schemes, transport systems and social insurance in order to regulate the conduct of conduct. These techniques might mobilise sovereign or disciplinary forms of power, such as laws, regulations, surveillance mechanisms or impact assessments, but they are invoked tactically within governmental forms of power.<sup>185</sup>

Finally, government depends upon the creation of governable subjects. Here Dean asks “what forms of person, self and identity are presupposed by different practices of government and what sorts of transformation do these practices seek?”<sup>186</sup> Disciplinary power relied on the creation of individual, docile subjects such as the deviant, the criminal or the insane. In advanced liberal government, however, power works through the creation of free, rational citizens/subjects. It also requires the

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<sup>181</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, pp. 101 and 274.

<sup>182</sup> Rose and Miller, ‘Political Power beyond the State’, p. 185.

<sup>183</sup> Dean, *Governmentality*, p. 31.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 99.

<sup>186</sup> Dean, *Governmentality*, p. 32.

creation of authoritative experts with particular responsibilities, capacities and statuses. Certain forms of behaviour – efficiency, caution, entrepreneurship, patriotism, cooperation – are established as necessary within the broader regime of government, and “techniques of responsabilisation” work to produce subjects capable of self-government according to these criteria.<sup>187</sup>

This Foucauldian analytics of government is primarily a descriptive approach rather than a normative agenda. Its primary aim is to analyse and compare rationalities of government, rather than to present a case for the best or most effective form of government. However, as a Foucauldian perspective on power/knowledge implies, all theories have inherent ethical and political assumptions. In response to those who have criticised Foucauldian theory for not making its ethical stance explicit, an analytics of government can best be described as having an ethos of continual criticism and politicisation.<sup>188</sup>

For Dean, “an analytics of government attempts to show that our taken-for-granted ways of doing things and how we think about and question them are not entirely self-evident or necessary.”<sup>189</sup> It attempts to mark “out a space to ask questions about government, authority and power, without attempting to formulate a general set of principles by which various forms of the ‘conduct of conduct’ could be reformed.”<sup>190</sup> This stance of continual criticism is one advocated by Foucault who argued that the task of the intellectual was “to bring assumptions and things taken for granted again into question, to shake habits, ways of acting and thinking, to dispel the familiarity of the accepted.”<sup>191</sup> Such a perspective avoids adopting fixed perspectives ‘for’ or ‘against’ certain constellations of power/knowledge. As Hansen and Stepputat point out, “the state and modern governance is not something that we can be for or against as such, for the simple reason that we cannot escape it.”<sup>192</sup> Accordingly Foucault was reluctant to approach advanced liberal government from the point of

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<sup>187</sup> Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, p. 74.

<sup>188</sup> Barry *et al*, ‘Introduction’, p. 5; Brown, ‘Turtles all the way down’, p. 223; Cohen and Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, pp. 270 – 272; M. Foucault, ‘So it is important to think?’ in *Power*, p. 457; Gordon, ‘Introduction’, p xxxiv; J. Rajchman, ‘Introduction’, in Foucault, *The Politics of Truth*, pp. 10 and 15; J. Townshend, ‘Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: A New Paradigm from the Essex School?’, *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 5, 1, (2003), pp. 137 – 138 and 140 – 141.

<sup>189</sup> Dean, *Governmentality*, p. 21.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid*, p. 36.

<sup>191</sup> Foucault, quoted in Gordon, ‘Introduction’, p. xxxiv.

<sup>192</sup> Hansen and Stepputat, ‘Introduction’, p. 9. Foucault made a similar point about the Enlightenment. M. Foucault, ‘What is Enlightenment?’ in *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*, p. 313.

view of whether such forms of power were ‘good’ or bad’. For Foucault, “nothing, including the exercise of power, is evil in itself – but everything is dangerous.”<sup>193</sup> Thus Foucault’s position is not the apathy of nihilism, but a “hyper- and pessimistic activism” – since “everything is dangerous ... the ethical political choice we have to make every day is to determine which is the main danger.”<sup>194</sup>

This attentiveness to the dangerousness of certain rationalities of government can be regarded as a stance of politicisation, an attitude marked by an expanded definition of ‘the political’. Conventionally the field of politics is equated with political parties and state institutions in the domestic sphere, and states, wars and regimes in the international sphere. Power is possessed by actors, and politics is seen as the struggle for power between these pre-constituted actors. Certain dimensions – such as the family and the economy in liberal political thought – are regarded as private and non-political. In contrast, a Foucauldian approach entails a broader conception of ‘the political’ as the broader field of power relations that goes beyond these fixed identities and boundaries.<sup>195</sup> This broadened conception of the political draws on the insights of other branches of political theory – notably feminist theory and Marxist political economy – which have contested the liberal distinction between the public and private spheres through slogans such as “the personal is political.”<sup>196</sup> Thus, for Edkins, an enlarged concept of “‘the political’ has to do with the establishment of that very social order which sets out a particular, historically specific account of what counts as politics and defines other areas of social life as *not* politics.”<sup>197</sup> The political therefore encompasses more than just the contests between actors within a certain game of power – it also involves the constitution of those actors, the rules and aims of the game, and the field on which the game is played.<sup>198</sup> As Mark Wenman points out, “social identities do not exist prior to the moment of

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<sup>193</sup> Gordon, ‘Introduction’, p. xix.

<sup>194</sup> M. Foucault, ‘On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress’, in *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*, p. 256.

<sup>195</sup> Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations*; Lipschutz, *Globalization, Governmentality and Global Politics*, pp. 200 – 201; C. Mouffe, *On the Political*, (London; Routledge, 2005); M. A. Wenman, ‘What is Politics? The Approach of Radical Pluralism’, *Politics*, 23, 1, (2003), pp. 57 – 65.

<sup>196</sup> Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations*, p. 2.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> In different ways this broader meaning of ‘the political’ is conveyed by Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations*; Lipschutz, *Globalization, Governmentality and Global Politics*; and Mouffe, *On the Political*.

politics. Politics – in its multifarious practices – is the very means by which the multiplicity of social identities are perpetually formed and reformed.”<sup>199</sup>

The Foucauldian ethos of politicisation is therefore focussed on the exercise of power and the effects of particular regimes of government and constellations of power/knowledge. In particular it seeks to highlight how techniques which purport to be neutral, objective, technical and scientific can be forms of de-politicisation. For Edkins, strategies of de-politicisation work primarily through “a reduction to calculability” and the assertion that formations of knowledge are objective and neutral.<sup>200</sup> As such “a way to repoliticise, a ‘political act’, would be to interrupt discourse, to challenge what have, through discursive practices, been constituted as normal, natural and accepted ways of carrying on.”<sup>201</sup>

Whilst acknowledging that it is impossible to judge abstractly whether rationalities of government are ‘good’ or ‘bad’, several authors have drawn attention to the potentially de-politicising character of advanced liberal government. By working through the internalisation of rule and the creation of rational, consensual, free citizens, the task of government is conceived as the devising of proper forms of regulation in order to permit the natural productivity and efficiency of society and the market. There is a danger here that more adversarial articulations of democracy, such as those involving dissent, debate and conflict, are sidelined and the ‘responsible’ citizen becomes indistinguishable from that of the consumer, reducible to “the selection among functionally similar if not visually identical products on the ballot or supermarket shelf.”<sup>202</sup> There is a danger that the vibrancy of agonistic democracy is reduced to a particular and limited type of permissible disagreement, expressed through voting and political parties.<sup>203</sup>

Similarly, many critics of international summitry have argued that summits work to de-politicise global politics by attempting to remove issues of inequality, power and conflict to a domain ‘above politics’ where consensus can be reached. For Chatterjee and Finger, the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 depoliticised the environment-development debate by first constructing the environment as a source of threat, and

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<sup>199</sup> Wenman, ‘What is Politics?’, p. 61.

<sup>200</sup> Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations*, p. 1.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid, p. 12. See also Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*, p. 256.

<sup>202</sup> Lipschutz, *Globalization, Governmentality and Global Politics*, p. 196.

<sup>203</sup> I. M. Young, ‘Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy’, *Political Theory*, 29, 5, (2001), pp. 670 – 690.

then by advocating the ‘New Age model of politics’ as a response to this threat. This is a model which

says that since we are all faced with an unprecedented threat and are equally endangered, we must all join hands as humans in order to overcome the threat. We have to, it is argued, work together for a common purpose. The more powerful among us will, quite logically, have to take the upper hand to lead the process.<sup>204</sup>

Yet, whether such summits de-politicise or re-politicise is, of course, a fundamentally subjective evaluation. As Putnam and Bayne point out in their study of the G7 summits, the impetus for summitry in the 1970s was partly a response to the perceived ‘bureaucratisation’ of politics. From many politicians’ perspectives, “international economics could no longer be considered ‘low politics’, left to bloodless diplomats, to cunning central bankers, to distant international organisations or to the haphazards of the market.”<sup>205</sup> Therefore “it was natural that the particular politicians in power in the key countries in the mid-1970s would turn to summitry as a means for re-asserting their power and responsibility.”<sup>206</sup> From the perspective of these politicians, such summits worked to re-politicise issues of environment and development.<sup>207</sup>

The perspective adopted here, in line with a Foucauldian ethos of constant critique, is that drawing attention to relationships of power, dissent, counter-conducts and conflicts is a form of re-politicisation. For Foucault, whilst he acknowledged that it is perhaps true that everything is political, he argued that what is more true is that “everything can be politicised, everything may become political. Politics is no more or less than that which is born with resistance to governmentality, the first uprising, the first confrontation.”<sup>208</sup> In contrast, assertions of consensus, harmony and partnership work to sideline critique and de-politicise government. Since a vibrant and vital democracy relies upon a heterogeneous and plural exchange of views, and

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<sup>204</sup> Chatterjee and Finger, *The Earth Brokers*, p. 169.

<sup>205</sup> Putnam and Bayne, *Hanging Together*, p. 18.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Indeed Schechter cites “the primacy of politics” as an institutional weakness of global conferences. Schechter, *United Nations Global Conferences*, pp. 13 and 198 – 199.

<sup>208</sup> Foucault, unpublished manuscript dated 1979, quoted in M. Senellart, ‘Course Context’, in Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 390.

requires spaces for agonistic conflict and dissent, the Foucauldian position of criticism and politicisation is therefore, at its heart, a democratic one.<sup>209</sup>

## *Conclusion*

This chapter has argued that a Foucauldian framework allows an interrogation of the political effects of the discourse of sustainable development and the politics of the WSSD. By following Foucault in seeing power in terms of relationships rather than capacities, and as deeply implicated in the production of knowledge, it has moved away from seeing sustainable development as either a neutral and instrumental concept divorced from power relations, or as an ideological mystification that simply reproduces existing material relationships. Rather, sustainable development can be viewed as a discourse that works to govern politics in a certain way, and thereby establishes specific fields of visibility, authorises particular regimes of knowledge, concretises a range of practices and techniques, and produces certain subjects and legitimate actors.

A governmentality perspective on sustainable development and the WSSD draws attention to the ways in which they work to regulate the conduct of conduct through the empowerment of free, responsible, rational subjects acting according to market logic. Familiar binaries of state and civil society, international and domestic, and power and freedom are destabilised and conventional assumptions about what constitutes government and resistance are questioned. As Foucault argued,

we need to escape the dilemma of being either for or against. One can, after all, be face-to-face, and upright [*debout et en face*]. Working with a government doesn't imply either a subjection or a blanket acceptance. One can work with and be intransigent at the same time.<sup>210</sup>

This stance of standing upright and face-to-face is one of critical engagement and constant questioning, where “to do criticism is to make harder those acts which are

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<sup>209</sup> Burchell, ‘Liberal Government and Techniques of the Self’, p. 33; Mouffe, *On the Political*, Young, ‘Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy’.

<sup>210</sup> Foucault, ‘So it is important to think?’, pp. 455 – 456.



now too easy.”<sup>211</sup> As such this thesis seeks to politicise and question the forms of rule established by sustainable development discourse at the WSSD. This is part of the broader ethical agenda of discourse analysis, which “seeks to make visible the political consequences of adopting one representation of social reality rather than another.”<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid, p. 456.

<sup>212</sup> Abrahamsen, *Disciplining Democracy*, p. 138.

## Chapter 2

# Producing Sustainable Development:

## The Discourse from Stockholm to Johannesburg

*Modern man is an animal whose politics places  
his existence as a living being in question*

*Michel Foucault, 1979*<sup>1</sup>

### *Introduction*

The discourse of sustainable development has dominated the fields of environment and development politics since the publication of the Brundtland Commission's report, *Our Common Future*, in 1987.<sup>2</sup> Whilst the concept has been criticised for being vague, full of contradictions and of doubtful scientific value, as a discourse it has established certain fields of visibility, constructed particular forms of truth as legitimate and useful, and empowered specific actors as necessary authorities for its implementation.<sup>3</sup> It has been made concrete in innumerable projects, institutions, research programmes and deliberative forums, and it has structured thinking about environment and development for over three decades. As Dryzek notes, "it is arguably the dominant global discourse of ecological concern", and Bill Adams acknowledges its capacity "to restructure development discourse and reorganise development practice."<sup>4</sup> This chapter shows how the discourse has been produced, and what some of the political effects of these constructions have been.

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<sup>1</sup> Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> Brundtland, *Our Common Future*.

<sup>3</sup> Frazier argues that "instead of offering a true solution to contemporary problems, the term is a source of confusion, contention and even deception." J. G. Frazier, 'Sustainable Development: Modern Elixir or Sack Dress?', *Environmental Conservation*, 24, 2, (1997), p. 182.

<sup>4</sup> Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth*, p. 145; W. M. Adams, *Green Development: Environment and Sustainability in the Third World*, (London; Routledge, 2001), p. 1.

Treating sustainable development as a discourse means side-stepping many of the conceptual debates about what, exactly, sustainable development *is*. This chapter does not seek to reveal an essential truth behind the concept, refine it, or formulate a better definition. Conceptually, sustainable development is, like the concepts of democracy or justice, essentially contested, in the sense that people will always disagree about exactly what it implies in both theory and practice.<sup>5</sup> Adopting a Foucauldian approach to discourse as often fragmented and contradictory, this chapter does not seek to present a unitary, homogenous account of sustainable development or reduce it to some core truth, but rather to follow Dryzek in arguing that “sustainable development, like democracy, is a discourse rather than a concept which can or should be defined with any precision.”<sup>6</sup>

This chapter approaches sustainable development through key discursive statements such as the publications *Our Common Future*, *Caring for the Earth* and *Agenda 21*.<sup>7</sup> Whilst sustainable development is neither static nor homogenous, rather than attempting to chart the changes in the discourse over time the following sections draw attention to some of the key themes and continuities that have shaped the parameters of environment and development politics. Some of these regularities include recurring lines of division and tension, which are also highlighted in order to demonstrate the variety of interpretations of sustainable development. Although debates continue to rage over exactly what is to be sustained, by whom, and for how long, articulations of the discourse have shared a common appreciation that modern politics necessarily involves the government and management of environmental,

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<sup>5</sup> M. Jacobs, ‘Sustainable Development as a Contested Concept’, in A. Dobson (ed.), *Fairness and Futurity: Essays on Environmental Sustainability and Social Justice*, (Oxford; OUP, 1999), pp. 21 – 45. The idea of an essentially contested concept – concepts which “are not resolvable by argument of any kind” – owes its original formulation to W. B. Gallie who developed it in a lecture given to the Aristotelian society in 1956, reprinted as chapter eight of W. B. Gallie, *Philosophy and the Historical Understanding*, (New York; Schocken, 1968), p. 158. Examples of accounts of sustainable development that are more focussed on conceptual definitions include A. Dobson, ‘Environmental Sustainabilities: An Analysis and a Typology’, *Environmental Politics*, 5, 3, (1996), pp. 401 – 428; M. Gatto, ‘Sustainability: Is it a well-defined concept?’ *Ecological Applications*, 5, 4, (1995), pp. 1181 – 1183; and K. Pezzoli, ‘Sustainable Development: A Transdisciplinary Overview of the Literature’, *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, 40, 5, (1997), pp. 549 – 574.

<sup>6</sup> Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, pp. 5 and 221; and Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth*, p. 147. Dryzek identifies sustainable development as one particular environmental discourse, and distinguishes it from survivalism; prometheanism; administrative rationalism; democratic pragmatism; economic rationalism; ecological modernisation; green consciousness, and green political discourses. Whilst indebted to Dryzek, I differ from him in regarding sustainable development as more of a meta-discourse within which elements such as administrative rationalism, democratic pragmatism, economic rationalism, ecological modernisation and even more radical green discourses (to use Dryzek’s categories) compete and coexist.

<sup>7</sup> Brundtland, *Our Common Future*; IUCN *et al*, *Caring for the Earth*; and UN, *Agenda 21*.

social and economic issues. The final part of this chapter therefore shows how sustainable development can be regarded as a form of eco-governmentality.

### *Fields of visibility*

The discourse of sustainable development explicitly brought the entire planet into focus as an object of government. The growing concern with environmental issues in the 1960s and 1970s coincided with the broadcasting of the iconic image of the planet Earth from space, and the discourse of sustainable development extended techniques of environmental management across the world.<sup>8</sup> The Brundtland Report accordingly began with the image of ‘Spaceship Earth’, noting that “in the middle of the twentieth century, we saw our planet from space for the first time. ... From space, we see a small and fragile ball dominated not by human activity and edifice but by a pattern of clouds, oceans, greenery, and soils.”<sup>9</sup> In one of the key texts of sustainable development therefore, the entire planet (fragile, precious, and singular) is established as the field of visibility for government. As Escobar asserts, the report inaugurated “a period of unprecedented gluttony in the history of vision and knowledge.”<sup>10</sup> This global and planetary focus was unique to the discourse of sustainable development, and in particular to the way it articulated the environmental and development agendas.

Development discourse – at least in its modern form dating from point four of President Truman’s 1949 speech – was essentially binary rather than planetary, dividing the world into developed and underdeveloped societies.<sup>11</sup> It was also

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<sup>8</sup> A. Escobar, ‘Constructing Nature: Elements for a Poststructuralist Political Ecology’, in R. Peet and M. Watts (eds.), *Liberation Ecologies: Environment, Development and Social Movements*, (London; Routledge, 1996), p. 49; Sachs, *Planet Dialectics*.

<sup>9</sup> Brundtland, *Our Common Future*, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Escobar, *Encountering Development*, p. 193. Escobar’s treatment of Brundtland and sustainable development overall, however, is lamentably brief and dismissive.

<sup>11</sup> M. Cowen and R. Shenton, ‘The Invention of Development’, in J. Crush (ed.), *Power of Development*, (London; Routledge, 1995), pp. 27 – 43; G. Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*, (London; Zed Books, 1997); and W. Sachs, *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge and Power*, (London; Zed Books, 1992). For constructive critiques of these approaches see A. Agrawal, ‘Poststructuralist Approaches to Development: Some Critical Reflections’, *Peace and Change*, 21, 4, (1996), pp. 464 – 477; D. Simon, ‘Development Revisited: Thinking about, practising and teaching development after the Cold War’, in D. Simon and A. N rman (eds.), *Development as Theory and Practice: Current Perspectives on Development and Development Co-operation*, (Harlow; Longman, 1999), pp. 17 – 54; Simon, ‘Rethinking (post)modernism, postcolonialism and posttraditionalism’; D. Simon, ‘Separated by Common Ground? Bringing

fundamentally state-centric, with articulations such as Walt Rostow's *Stages of Economic Growth* envisaging national processes of economic modernisation through five stages: traditional society; pre-conditions for take-off; take-off; drive to maturity; and "the age of high mass consumption."<sup>12</sup> As Rostow's work indicates, development discourse has commonly relied upon economic growth as a fundamental indicator of development – although more recent articulations have stressed 'human development', democracy and 'good governance'.<sup>13</sup>

The idea that natural limits might exist which would constrain the process of development was raised by the environmental discourses of the 1960s and 1970s, although their roots can be traced to at least the early twentieth century US conservation movement and individuals such as Gifford Pinchot.<sup>14</sup> A seminal publication in the development of modern environmentalism was *The Limits to Growth*, published in 1972 by the Club of Rome, a group of economists who modelled the relationship between the rapidly growing world population and finite resources.<sup>15</sup> A number of environmental publications around this period raised concerns about the impact of human development and industrial pollution on the environment, and began to question the basic assumptions of progress and growth behind the development ideal.<sup>16</sup> The institutional emergence of environmental concerns onto the stage of global governance is commonly attributed to the Stockholm Conference of 1972.<sup>17</sup> This was the world's first major environmental

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(post)development and (post)colonialism together', *The Geographical Journal*, 172, 1, (2006), pp. 10 – 21; and Pieterse, 'After Post-Development?'

<sup>12</sup> W. W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, (London; CUP, 1971); and W. W. Rostow, 'The Take-off into Self-Sustained Growth', *The Economic Journal*, 66, 261, (1956), pp. 25 – 48.

<sup>13</sup> Abrahamsen, *Disciplining Democracy*; S. Anand and A. K. Sen, *Sustainable Human Development: Concepts and Priorities*, (New York; UNDP, 1996); J. N. Pieterse, 'My Development or Yours? Alternative Development, Post-Development, Reflexive Development', *Development and Change*, 29, (1998), pp. 343 – 373; Simon, 'Development Revisited'; and UNDP, *Human Development Report*, (New York; OUP, 1990).

<sup>14</sup> Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth*, pp. 76 – 77; and K. Lee, 'Global Sustainable Development: Its Intellectual and Historical Roots', in K. Lee, A. Holland and D. MacNeill (eds.), *Global Sustainable Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2000), pp. 35 – 38.

<sup>15</sup> D. H. Meadows, D. L. Meadows, J. Randers, and W. W. Behrens III, *The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind*, (New York; New American Library, 1974).

<sup>16</sup> R. Carson, *Silent Spring*, (London; Hamish Hamilton, 1964); P. Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb*, (London; Pan Books, 1971); E. F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered*, (London; Vintage, 1973/1993). Dresner records how the concept of a "sustainable society" first emerged in a conference on Science and Technology for Human Development in 1974, convened by the World Council of Churches. S. Dresner, *The Principles of Sustainability*, (London; Earthscan, 2002), p. 29.

<sup>17</sup> Adams, *Green Development*, pp. 55 – 58.

summit and resulted in the creation of the UNEP as well as paving the way for the future negotiation of many multilateral environmental agreements. Although environmental concerns dominated, developing countries argued that poverty and development were more pressing global concerns, and Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi famously stated that “poverty is the worst pollution.”<sup>18</sup> Whilst sustainable development itself was not explicitly articulated, Stockholm was the first major international event to address questions of pollution and environmental degradation and discuss them in the same venue as developing countries’ concerns regarding poverty and under-development.<sup>19</sup>

One of the first explicit references to sustainable development was in the *World Conservation Strategy*, published by the IUCN, UNEP and WWF in 1980.<sup>20</sup> It defined sustainable development as “the integration of conservation and development to ensure that modifications to the planet do indeed secure the well-being and survival of all people.”<sup>21</sup> It was the *World Conservation Strategy* that, as its authors retrospectively asserted, first argued “that conservation is *not* the opposite of development.”<sup>22</sup> Rather, they could be mutually beneficial agendas, with respect for the environment contributing to a better quality of development, and development allowing people to escape the poverty trap that forced them to degrade the environment. This reframing has since been described as “one of the major intellectual breakthroughs of the twentieth century.”<sup>23</sup>

Despite this, the *World Conservation Strategy* was widely perceived as just another piece of environmental scare-mongering and received relatively scant attention at the time.<sup>24</sup> It was the 1987 Brundtland Report which brought sustainable development into focus as the dominant global paradigm for discussing environment

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<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Dresner, *The Principles of Sustainability*, p. 28.

<sup>19</sup> Adams, *Green Development*, pp. 55 – 58; Haas, ‘UN Conferences and Constructivist Governance of the Environment’, p. 79.

<sup>20</sup> IUCN, UNEP and WWF, *World Conservation Strategy: Living Resource Conservation for Sustainable Development*, (Gland; IUCN, UNEP, and WWF, 1980).

<sup>21</sup> It went on to define development as the use of resources to meet human needs, whilst conservation was “the management of human use of the biosphere so that it may yield the greatest sustainable benefit to present generations whilst maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of future generations.” The similarity to the Brundtland formulation is evident. Dresner, *The Principles of Sustainability*, p. 30.

<sup>22</sup> IUCN *et al*, *Caring for the Earth*, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> A. Khosla, ‘Foreword’, in T. C. Trzyna (ed.), *A Sustainable World: Defining and Measuring Sustainable Development*, (Sacramento; IUCN and International Center for the Environment and Public Policy, Californian Institute of Public Affairs, 1995), p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> Dresner, *The Principles of Sustainability*, p. 31; S. M. Lélé, ‘Sustainable Development: A Critical Review’, *World Development*, 19, 6, (1991), p. 610.

and development issues. Formed at the request of the UN Secretary-General but nominally independent of the UN, the 22-person World Commission on Environment and Development convened in 1984 and produced *Our Common Future* in 1987, referred to as the Brundtland Report after the commission's chairperson, Norwegian Environment Minister and later Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland.<sup>25</sup> It is *Our Common Future's* definition of sustainable development which has continued to shape the debates on environment and development, famously asserting that "sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."<sup>26</sup> This definition was followed by the clarification that it

contains within it two key concepts: the concept of 'needs,' in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organisation on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.<sup>27</sup>

It is this combination of traditional development concerns (needs) with environmental concerns (limitations on the environment's ability to satisfy those needs) which is at the heart of the sustainable development vision. The Brundtland Report argued that "it is impossible to separate economic development issues from environmental issues."<sup>28</sup> Since the development agenda encompasses both economic and social issues, sustainable development is often described as incorporating three key pillars: environmental, social and economic.<sup>29</sup>

The fusion of development and environmental issues in *Our Common Future* produced a field of visibility which tried to reconcile the optimism of development with the pessimism of environmentalism. Limits were not denied in the Brundtland Report, but they were reframed. It claimed that

the concept of sustainable development does imply limits – not absolute limits but limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organisation on

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<sup>25</sup> Brundtland, *Our Common Future*.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 43.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> C. George, 'Sustainable Development and Global Governance', *Journal of Environment and Development*, 16, 1, (2007), pp. 104 – 114; D. MacNeill, 'The Concept of Sustainable Development', in Lee *et al*, *Global Sustainable Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, p. 16; J. Meadowcroft, 'The Politics of Sustainable Development: Emergent Arenas and Challenges for Political Science', *International Political Science Review*, 20, 2, (1999), p. 224.

environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities.<sup>30</sup>

This reconciliation was achieved by simultaneously recognising the seriousness of the environmental crisis, as well as urging that the crisis could be avoided. *Caring for the Earth*, a follow-up to the *World Conservation Strategy*, warned that “we are gambling with the survival of civilisation”, but went on to observe that “we need not lose.”<sup>31</sup> The language of sustainable development is that of desertification, nuclear disasters, chemical spills, resource and biodiversity depletion, global warming and population growth; but it is also that of scientific progress, public-private partnerships, renewable energy, recycling, democratic participation and progress. The Brundtland Report captured this dynamic between crisis and opportunity in its opening paragraphs.

From space, we see a small and fragile ball dominated not by human activity and edifice but by a pattern of clouds, oceans, greenery and soils. Humanity’s inability to fit its doings into that pattern is changing planetary systems, fundamentally. Many such changes are accompanied by life-threatening hazards. This new reality, from which there is no escape, must be recognised – and managed. Fortunately, the new reality coincides with more positive developments new to this century ... our technology and science gives us at least the potential to look deeper into and better understand natural systems.<sup>32</sup>

From space, nothing was left invisible to the gaze of the scientist or environmental expert, and a specific, bounded field of visibility referred to as ‘the environment’ became integrated into the development vision.<sup>33</sup> As Paul Rutherford asserts, “regulatory ecological science does not so much describe the environment as actively constitute it as an object of knowledge and, through various modes of positive intervention, manage and police it.”<sup>34</sup>

The key texts of sustainable development therefore represented the articulation of familiar environmental concerns – pollution, population growth, resource depletion, biodiversity loss – within development discourse. Whilst attempting to balance the three pillars of sustainable development, the discursive focus was primarily upon these apparently ‘environmental’ issues. The key texts themselves prioritised environmental and conservation-orientated policies, with the Brundtland Report arguing that in order to conserve biodiversity “the total expanse of protected

<sup>30</sup> Brundtland, *Our Common Future*, p. 8.

<sup>31</sup> IUCN *et al*, *Caring for the Earth*, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> Brundtland, *Our Common Future*, p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> Escobar, ‘Constructing Nature’, p. 52; Luke, ‘On Environmentality’, pp. 63 – 64.

<sup>34</sup> P. Rutherford, ‘The Entry of Life into History’, in Darier, *Discourses of the Environment*, p. 56.



areas needs to be at least tripled”, and invoking nuclear disaster as “undoubtedly the gravest” threat the world faced.<sup>35</sup> *Caring for the Earth* explicitly stated that “the Earth has limits” and a “carrying capacity”, and instructed that “population growth must stop everywhere, and the rich must stabilise, and in some cases reduce, their consumption of resources.”<sup>36</sup> It also proposed “a widespread and deeply-held commitment to a new ethic, the ethic for sustainable living”, which recognises we are all “part of the great community of life.”<sup>37</sup> *Agenda 21*, one of the outcomes of the 1992 Rio Summit, was also balanced heavily towards environmental issues, with the “social and economic dimensions” being dealt with in seven paragraphs and 71 pages, whilst “conservation and management of resources for development” were given 14 paragraphs and 193 pages.<sup>38</sup> The Rio Summit conventions were primarily environmental, addressing biodiversity and climate change, as well as a declaration on forests, and attendance was dominated by environmental organisations and departments.<sup>39</sup>

Sustainable development discourse therefore inaugurated a global vision in which the government of environmental, economic and social issues was necessary. The need for consensus and global unity were stressed, with *Our Common Future* concluding that “the unity of human needs requires a functioning multilateral system that respects the democratic principle of consent and accepts that not only the Earth but also the world is one”, and that “whilst interpretations will vary”, there must be a “consensus on the basic concept of sustainable development and on a broad strategic framework for achieving it.”<sup>40</sup> This global vision led to the Rio Summit in 1992, which was attended by over 40,000 delegates and observers, and representatives of 183 countries. Delegates agreed on *Agenda 21*; the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, which listed 27 principles for sustainable development; two legally-binding conventions on biodiversity and climate change; and a declaration on forests.<sup>41</sup> The Global Environmental Facility (GEF) was established as a funding mechanism for these agreements, and exists to promote projects which tackle

<sup>35</sup> Brundtland, *Our Common Future*, pp. 19, 165 – 166 and 295 – 296.

<sup>36</sup> IUCN *et al*, *Caring for the Earth*, pp. 3 – 5 and 10.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 3 – 5.

<sup>38</sup> UN, *Agenda 21*.

<sup>39</sup> Chatterjee and Finger, *The Earth Brokers*; Meadowcroft, ‘The Politics of Sustainable Development’; Najam, ‘Developing Countries and Global Environmental Governance’, pp. 310 – 312.

<sup>40</sup> Brundtland, *Our Common Future*, pp. 41 – 43.

<sup>41</sup> M. Grubb, M. Koch, A. Munson, F. Sullivan and K. Thomson, *The Earth Summit Agreements: A Guide and Assessment*, (London; Earthscan, 1993).

explicitly global issues. Few discourses therefore have been as successful as sustainable development in establishing the entire planet as a field of government and management, and none have been as influential in integrating environmental concerns into the political mainstream.

### ***Regimes of knowledge***

Having established this global field of government, the discourse of sustainable development relied upon certain forms of knowledge and expertise to police it. Central to the discourse was an essentially optimistic view of science and technology, as well as the necessity of economic management and environmental security. Through these forms of knowledge particular ‘truths’ about sustainable development were produced, and authoritative experts were created.

Science and technology were regarded not only positively in mainstream sustainable development discourse, but as absolutely essential. This was both in their potential to help shift industrialised societies onto a more sustainable path as well as, through technology transfers, accelerating the development process in the rest of the world. *Our Common Future* recognised the “indispensable role” of the scientific community in “identifying risks, in assessing environmental impacts and in designing and implementing measures to deal with them.”<sup>42</sup> The very perception of many social and environmental problems – such as climate change, the hole in the ozone layer, water pollution, carcinogenic chemicals and declining soil fertility – depend upon scientific measurement and assessment. Such scientific expertise has become central to the negotiation of sustainable development at summits like Stockholm, Rio and Johannesburg, lending authority and legitimacy to these processes.<sup>43</sup> In term of implementation, scientific concepts such as the “maximum sustainable yield” of a renewable resource (such as fish stocks or forest timber) have been used to calculate

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<sup>42</sup> Brundtland, *Our Common Future*, p. 326.

<sup>43</sup> E. Corell and G. Sundqvist, ‘Knowledge Processes in Decision-Making on Sustainability: Challenges for the Future’, in Kalhauge *et al*, *Global Challenges*, p. 234.

the rate at which resources could be consumed without depleting the capital stock, and such instruments were widely promoted in *Agenda 21*.<sup>44</sup>

New technologies were seen in the Brundtland Report as an essential part of the implementation of sustainable development solutions, and the Report called for “a technological system that can search continuously for new solutions.”<sup>45</sup> It argued that the promotion of sustainable development will have to be “based on the international exchange of technology: through trade in improved equipment, technology-transfer agreements, provision of experts, research collaboration and so on.”<sup>46</sup> *Agenda 21* also included a chapter on the role of the scientific and technological community, and sought to enable them “to make a more open and effective contribution to the decision-making processes concerning environment and development.”<sup>47</sup> Sustainable development discourse thus incorporated discourses of ecological modernisation which emerged in the late 1980s and 1990s and envisioned clean, green and sustainable forms of industry.<sup>48</sup>

Sustainable development was also influential in the rise of the discipline of environmental economics, and particularly the notion of ‘green accounting’ in which ‘externalities’ such as pollution, adverse impacts on community health and the utilisation of non-renewable resources would be internalised into the costs of business. The Brundtland Report warned that “the process of economic development must be more soundly based upon the realities of the stock of capital that sustains it.”<sup>49</sup> This rationality was articulated by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali at the Rio Summit in 1992. He argued that

ecology comes from the Greek *oikos-logos*, that is, ‘the science of the home’; economy comes from the Greek *oikonomia*, that is, ‘good management of the home’. They amount to the same thing; ecology is, by its very nature, part of economy. ... As nature is now entirely in man’s hands, it is quite normal to consider it, no longer as a given but as an acquisition, an investment which must constantly be rolled over,

<sup>44</sup> Gatto, ‘Sustainability’; UN, *Agenda 21*, 16.5; 16.23; 18.67; 18.76.

<sup>45</sup> Brundtland, *Our Common Future*, p. 65.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p. 87.

<sup>47</sup> UN, *Agenda 21*, 31.1.

<sup>48</sup> Dryzek notes that whilst sustainable development and ecological modernisation are in many ways similar concepts, “sustainable development speaks more explicitly to Third World development than does ecological modernisation.” Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth*, p. 172. See also Baker, ‘Sustainable Development as Symbolic Commitment’; U. Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, (tr. M. Ritter), (London; Sage, 1992); U. Beck, *Ecological Politics in an Age of Risk*, (tr. A. Weisz), (Cambridge; Polity Press, 1995); Hajer, *The Politics of Environmental Discourse*; and A. P. J. Mol and D. A. Sonnenfeld, ‘Ecological Modernisation Around the World: An Introduction’, *Environmental Politics*, 9, 1, (2000), pp. 1 – 14.

<sup>49</sup> Brundtland, *Our Common Future*, p. 52.

amortised just like the other costs, salaries, financial expenditures and raw materials.<sup>50</sup>

Whilst some economists have expressed scepticism about the usefulness of the concept of sustainable development, a majority have agreed with Pearce and Barbier that “most environmental problems have their origins in the misworkings of the economic system, and that their solutions therefore lie in the correction of these misworkings”, which fundamentally translates as the “monetarisation of the environment.”<sup>51</sup> If natural resources are properly priced, according to this rationality, then the most efficient arrangement of resources, commodities and waste will inevitably follow.

Given this predominance of economic forms of knowledge within the discourse it is not surprising that the Brundtland Report espoused greater economic growth as an imperative for achieving sustainable development.<sup>52</sup> The first “critical objective” in the pursuit of sustainable development was therefore “reviving growth.”<sup>53</sup> In line with this objective the Report called for “overall national income growth of around 5 per cent a year in the developing economies of Asia, 5.5 per cent in Latin America, and 6 per cent in Africa and West Asia.”<sup>54</sup> *Agenda 21* also called for the “reactivation and acceleration of development” after the ‘lost decade’ of the 1980s.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, it urged that opening up and expanding international trade was essential in order to achieve the desired rate of economic growth. *Agenda 21* identified priorities for sustainable development including trade liberalisation, “making trade and environment mutually supportive” and “encouraging macroeconomic policies conducive to environment and development.”<sup>56</sup> It instructs the international community to “facilitate, in a timely way, the integration of all

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<sup>50</sup> B. Boutros-Ghali, ‘Opening address to the UNCED, 03/06/1992’, in S. P Johnson (ed.), *The Earth Summit: The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)*, (London; Graham and Trotman, 1993), p. 44.

<sup>51</sup> D. Pearce and E. B. Barbier, *Blueprint for a Sustainable Economy*, (London; Earthscan, 2000), p. xi. See also S. Schmidheiny and F. Zorraquin, *Financing Change: The Financial Community, Eco-Efficiency and Sustainable Development*, (Cambridge MA; WBCSD and MIT Press, 1996). For an economists’ critique, which however reaches remarkably similar conclusions, see W. Beckerman, “‘Sustainable Development’: Is it a Useful Concept?”, *Environmental Values*, 3, (1994), pp. 191 – 209.

<sup>52</sup> In contrast, Hermann Daly has advocated an economic model of sustainable development which is not based on growth. H. Daly, *Steady-State Economics*, (London; Earthscan, 1992).

<sup>53</sup> Brundtland, *Our Common Future*, p. 49.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p. 50.

<sup>55</sup> UN, *Agenda 21*, 2.2.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 2.3.

countries into the world economy and the international trading system.”<sup>57</sup> Throughout *Our Common Future* and *Agenda 21* there are references to the need to remove trade distortions and protectionist policies, liberalise trade, and increase the exports of developing countries.<sup>58</sup>

Despite this call for reinvigorated economic growth and international trade, the Brundtland Report was clear that development as usual was not an option. It noted that “previously our main concerns centred on the effects of development on the environment. Today, we need to be equally concerned about the ways in which environmental degradation can dampen or reverse economic development.”<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, it gravely warned that “the risks increase faster than do our abilities to manage them”, and that “failures to manage the environment and sustain development threaten to overwhelm all countries.”<sup>60</sup> The Report urged that new environmentally and socially sustainable development paths must be located in order to avoid disaster. This note of caution, often unheard when set against the optimism of the broader discourse, was reflected in the growing concern with environmental security. *Our Common Future* argued that “the deepening and widening environmental crisis presents a threat to national security – and even survival – that may be greater than well-armed, ill-deposed neighbours and unfriendly alliances”, drawing attention to the linkages between resource degradation, conflict and unsustainable development.<sup>61</sup> An influential body of literature, stimulated by Thomas Homer-Dixon’s work within the University of Toronto’s ‘Project on Environment, Population and Security’ in the 1990s, has emerged which frames environmental degradation and unsustainable development as a security threat.<sup>62</sup> Especially in its more apocalyptic articulations,

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 2.10.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid; and Brundtland, *Our Common Future*, pp. 75 – 84.

<sup>59</sup> Brundtland, *Our Common Future*, pp. 32 – 33.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, pp. 35 – 37.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, pp. 6 – 7, and chapter 11.

<sup>62</sup> T. F. Homer-Dixon, ‘On the Threshold: Environmental Changes as Causes of Acute Conflict’, *International Security*, 16, 2, (1991), pp. 76 – 116. See also J. Barnett, ‘Destabilizing the environment-conflict thesis’, *Review of International Studies*, 26, (2000), pp. 271 – 288; B. Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, (Hemel Hempstead; Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), pp. 131 – 133; H. Dyer, ‘Environmental Security and International Relations: The Case for Enclosure’, *Review of International Studies*, 27, (2001), pp. 441 – 450; B. Hartmann, ‘Population, Environment and Security: A New Trinity’, *Environment and Urbanization*, 10, 2, (1998), pp. 113 – 127; T. F. Homer-Dixon and M. A. Levy, ‘Environment and Security’, *International Society*, 20, 3, (1995), pp. 189 – 198; M. A. Levy, ‘Is the Environment a National Security Issue?’, *International Security*, 20, 2, (1995), pp. 35 – 62; and M. Thompson, ‘Security and Solidarity: An Anti-Reductionist Analysis of Environmental Policy’, in Fischer and Hajer, *Living With Nature*, pp. 135 – 150.

such as that of Robert Kaplan, resource scarcity and over-population are a stimulus to conflict and pose an increasing security threat to nation-states and Western civilisation.<sup>63</sup> These warnings of environmental instability and insecurity have reinvigorated the urgency of development, since now the very survival of the planet appears to depend on humankind's ability to manage global development.<sup>64</sup>

The dominance of natural scientists, technicians, economists, accountants and security experts in the discourse of sustainable development have established certain ways of speaking "in the true" for environmental, social and economic problems.<sup>65</sup> Specialised groups of experts are authorised to guide and advise societies on the most effective, secure and efficient paths to sustainable development. Legitimate interventions and productions of truth are channelled through particular academic disciplines and journals, and institutions such as the World Bank have re-defined their role as the leading global repository of environmental knowledge.<sup>66</sup> Focussing on modern environmental management, Timothy Luke argues that graduate studies courses in the American academy function to

routinely produce eco-managerialists, or professional-technical workers with the specific knowledge – as it has been scientifically validated – and the operational power – as it is institutionally constructed – to cope with 'the environmental crisis' on what are believed to be sound scientific and technical grounds.<sup>67</sup>

This dominance of scientific experts is problematic for more democratic conceptions of politics. As Dryzek notes, this approach serves to legitimate "the idea that public policy is a matter for technical, expert choice, and not a question on which non-specialists such as elected officials, still less any broader public have any rightful

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<sup>63</sup> R. D. Kaplan, 'The Coming Anarchy: How Scarcity, Crime, Overpopulation, Tribalism, and Disease are Rapidly Destroying the Social Fabric of Our Planet', *Atlantic Monthly*, 273, 2, (1994), pp. 44 – 76.

<sup>64</sup> Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars*; M. Duffield, 'Getting Savages to Fight Barbarians: Development, Security and the Colonial Present', *Conflict, Security and Development*, 5, 2, (2005), pp. 141 – 159.

<sup>65</sup> Foucault, 'The Order of Discourse', pp. 60 – 61.

<sup>66</sup> See the academic journals *Sustainable Development*, *Global Environmental Politics*, *Environment and Development*, *Environmental Planning and Management*, *Environmental Policy and Planning*, *Ecological Economics*, *Environmental Conservation*, and many others. On the World Bank, see M. Goldman, 'The Birth of a Discipline: Producing Authoritative Knowledge, World Bank-style', *Ethnography*, 2, 2, (2001), pp. 191 – 217; and Z. Young, *A New Green Order: The World Bank and the Politics of the Global Environmental Facility*, (London; Pluto Press, 2002), p. 205.

<sup>67</sup> T. W. Luke, 'Eco-Managerialism: Environmental Studies as a Power/Knowledge Formation', in Fischer and Hajer, *Living With Nature*, p. 103.

say.”<sup>68</sup> Through such constructions of power/knowledge the de-politicising potential of sustainable development is made evident.

### *Techniques and technologies*

Although the precise meanings and conceptual implications of sustainable development have been disputed ever since *Our Common Future* popularised the phrase, the discourse has become concretised in innumerable projects, programmes, initiatives and technologies. Indeed the sheer diversity of projects apparently implemented in the name of sustainable development has prompted many critics to argue that the term is meaningless.<sup>69</sup> However, the fact that many of these techniques and technologies explicitly situate themselves in relationship to *Our Common Future*, *Agenda 21* and the Rio Summit, and reflect a “coherent set of ideas” regarding the interrelationships between economic, social and environmental issues, places them within the broader discourse of sustainable development.<sup>70</sup>

Sustainable development policies have been characterised by an active and interventionist approach, as issues which had previously existed ‘naturally’ or autonomously are brought within governmental scope. For example, *Our Common Future* urges that, “with minerals and fossil fuels, the rate of depleting and the emphasis on recycling and economy of use should be calibrated to ensure that the resources does not run out before acceptable substitutes are available.”<sup>71</sup> Issues such as the mix of energy supply, previously “allowed to flow together randomly”, is revealed to be far “too important for its development to continue in such a random manner.”<sup>72</sup> In the field of population policy *Our Common Future* urged that

governments must work on several fronts – to limit population growth; to control the impact of such growth on resources and, with increasing knowledge, enlarge their range and improve their productivity; to realise human potential so that people can

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<sup>68</sup> Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth*, p. 85.

<sup>69</sup> Beckerman, ‘Sustainable Development’, p. 206; Frazier, ‘Sustainable Development’, p. 183.

<sup>70</sup> Adams, *Green Development*, pp. 18 and 54; Meadowcroft, ‘Sustainable Development’, p. 374.

<sup>71</sup> Brundtland, *Our Common Future*, p. 46.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, p. 202.

better harvest and use resources; and to provide people with forms of social security other than large numbers of children.<sup>73</sup>

According to *Caring for the Earth*, “countries with high rates of population growth should give priority for achieving stability.”<sup>74</sup> *Our Common Future* noted that this might require “direct measures to reduce fertility.”<sup>75</sup> Thus sovereign and interventionist forms of power are invoked as necessary to manage sustainable development across the entire scope of human and natural life.<sup>76</sup>

Within this interventionist rationality a plethora of technologies have constituted the discourse in practice: energy technology transfers, sustainable agriculture, the creation of bio-diversity regions, environmental citizenship schemes, strategic assessments and countless others. However, three types of technique for implementing sustainable development stand out: monitoring and assessments programmes; public participation processes; and multilateral negotiations and institutions.

The scale of the sustainable development challenge and the need for a holistic approach to economic, social and environmental issues has made policy-makers aware of the lack of sufficiently detailed data on many aspects of the sustainable development agenda. Monitoring and assessment programmes at both national and international levels have thus proliferated since the Stockholm conference. Environmental impact assessments, national conservation or sustainable development strategies, environmental monitoring systems, sustainable development indicators, and watershed management plans have all multiplied.<sup>77</sup> With regard to urban sustainable development for example, *Agenda 21* states that

all countries should undertake, with the active participation of the business sector as appropriate, pilot projects in selected sites for the collection, analysis and subsequent dissemination of urban data, including environmental impact analysis at the local, state/provincial, national and international levels and the establishment of city data management capabilities.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid, pp. 95 – 96.

<sup>74</sup> IUCN *et al*, *Caring for the Earth*, p. 47.

<sup>75</sup> Brundtland, *Our Common Future*, p. 56.

<sup>76</sup> J. Meadowcroft, ‘Planning, Democracy and the Challenge of Sustainable Development’, *International Political Science Review*, 18, 2, (1997), p. 171.

<sup>77</sup> Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth*; Meadowcroft, ‘Planning, Democracy and the Challenge of Sustainable Development’; Pearce and Barbier, *Blueprint for a Sustainable Economy*.

<sup>78</sup> UN, *Agenda 21*, 7.17.



NGOs and international agencies have fulfilled similar functions globally, with examples of assessments including the WorldWatch Institute's *State of the World* and *Vital Signs* reports, the World Resources Institute's *Earthtrends* programme, the UN *Earthwatch* initiative, and the UNEP's World Conservation Monitoring Centre and Global Environmental Outlook reports.<sup>79</sup> Even military satellites and surveillance technologies have been deployed in order to monitor sustainable development and environmental indicators.<sup>80</sup>

As well as monitoring and assessment, the discourse of sustainable development has encouraged new participatory processes and ways of stimulating broader public engagement.<sup>81</sup> The Brundtland Report asserts that sustainable development requires “a political system that secures effective citizen participation in decision-making”, which

is best secured by decentralising the management of resources upon which local communities depend, and giving these communities an effective say over the use of these resources. It will also require promoting citizens' initiatives, empowering peoples' organisations, and strengthening local democracy.<sup>82</sup>

Public enquiries and hearings, the engagement of Interested and Affected Parties in environmental impact assessments, freedom of access to information, and education for sustainable development are all stressed in the Report.<sup>83</sup> The *Rio Declaration* included the principle that “environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level.”<sup>84</sup>

An important stimulus for facilitating greater public participation in sustainable development has been *Agenda 21* which asserted that that “one of the fundamental prerequisites for the achievement of sustainable development is broad public participation in decision-making.”<sup>85</sup> Identifying nine “Major Groups” – women, children, indigenous peoples, NGOs, local governments, trade unions, business, science, and farmers – *Agenda 21* resolved that “any policies, definitions or

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<sup>79</sup> See websites for the WorldWatch Institute publications; World Resources Institute, *Earthtrends*; UN, *Earthwatch*; UNEP, World Conservation Monitoring Centre; and UNEP, *Global Environmental Outlook*.

<sup>80</sup> Hartmann, ‘Population, Environment and Security’, p. 126; Luke, ‘On Environmentality’, p. 68; N. Peluso, ‘Coercing Conservation?’, *Global Environmental Change*, 3, 22, (1993), pp. 199 – 217.

<sup>81</sup> Adams, *Green Development*, pp. 113 – 117; P. A. Walker, ‘Democracy and environment: congruencies and contradictions in Southern Africa’, *Political Geography*, 18, 3, (1999), pp. 257 – 284.

<sup>82</sup> Brundtland, *Our Common Future*, pp. 63 – 65.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, pp. 63 – 64 and 111 – 114.

<sup>84</sup> UN, *Rio Declaration*, Principle 10.

<sup>85</sup> UN, *Agenda 21*, 23.2.

rules affecting access to and participation by non-governmental organisations in the work of United Nations institutions or agencies associated with the implementation of *Agenda 21* must apply equally to all major groups.”<sup>86</sup> The inclusion of representatives from these major groups in all UN sustainable development processes and negotiations has functioned as an important technique of inserting civil society into political processes. As one NGO activist observed, “the UN has trouble seeing this abstract thing of civil society, and to put it into major groups makes it easier for the staff. It makes it easier for them to say I need to get these boxes filled.”<sup>87</sup> The UN approach to securing representation for the major groups has been to allow a self-selection process through which prominent organisations nominate each other, and usually the largest, best resourced, and most experienced organisations emerge as the “automatic choice.”<sup>88</sup> According to one UN official, “we always went to organisations that seemed to have credibility, reliability, respect from their own community, and willing to act as facilitators for the participation of their community.”<sup>89</sup> Examples include the Women’s Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO), Business Action for Sustainable Development (BASD), the International Federation of Free Trade Unions, and the International Council for Science.

As well as the proliferation of public participation initiatives, sustainable development has also been implemented through more traditional techniques of international politics: treaties, conventions, summits and legal regimes. Summits and high-level diplomacy have been especially important techniques, as shown by the landmark status of Stockholm and Rio. Indeed it seems no account of the concept can avoid recognising their centrality, together with that of the Brundtland Report.<sup>90</sup> Their prominence is due to the way sustainable development is an explicitly global

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid, section III.

<sup>87</sup> Interview with Rebecca Pearl, Sustainable Development Programme Coordinator for WEDO, (New York, 22/10/2007).

<sup>88</sup> Ibid; interview with Tonya Vaturi, Programme Associate for Major Groups, Division for Sustainable Development, DESA, (New York, 16/10/2007).

<sup>89</sup> Interview with Zehra Aydin, UN focal point for Major Groups, (New York, 15/10/2007).

<sup>90</sup> For example, see Adams, *Green Development*, chapters 1 – 3; Dresner, *The Principles of Sustainability*; J. A. Elliott, *An Introduction to Sustainable Development*, (London; Routledge, 1999); George, ‘Sustainable Development and Global Governance’, pp. 102 – 125; J. Kirkby, P. O’Keefe and L. Timberlake (eds.), *The Earthscan Reader in Sustainable Development*, (London; Earthscan, 1995); W. M. Lafferty, ‘The Pursuit of Sustainable Development: Concepts, Policies and Arenas’, *International Political Science Review*, 20, 2, (1999), pp. 123 – 128; O. Langhelle, ‘Sustainable Development: Exploring the Ethics of “Our Common Future”’, *International Political Science Review*, 20, 2, (1999), pp. 129 – 149; Lélé, ‘Sustainable Development’, Meadowcroft, ‘Sustainable Development’; and D. Mebratu, ‘Sustainability and Sustainable Development: Historical and Conceptual Review’, *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, 18, (1998), pp. 493 – 520.

discourse, framed by *Our Common Future* as requiring “a new orientation in international relations”, which warned that “it is fundamental that the transition to sustainability be managed jointly by all nations.”<sup>91</sup> As a result, between UNCED and the turn of the millennium there were nine major UN summits and review conferences linked to the sustainable development agenda. In 1994 there were summits on Population and Development (Cairo), and Small Island Developing States (Barbados); in 1995 on Social Development (Copenhagen) and Women and Development (Beijing); in 1996 on Human Settlements (Istanbul) and Food (Vienna). In 1997 there was a five-year review of the Rio Earth Summit in New York known as Earth Summit II and in 1999 there were General Assembly reviews of Cairo and Barbados.<sup>92</sup>

The Rio Summit has come to occupy an almost mythical role in the discourse of sustainable development, and is remembered reverentially by many of those involved.<sup>93</sup> It was in Rio, according to most histories of sustainable development, that the concept acquired global political significance, and the Summit was regarded as “a major advance for the cause of sustainable development throughout the world.”<sup>94</sup> It established NGO involvement in the governance of global sustainable development, with over 1,400 NGOs officially registering with the UNCED Secretariat as observers and lobbyists.<sup>95</sup> It is often asserted that many of the agreements and conventions that constitute the core of sustainable development in practice may not have come to fruition without the “political imperative” of the Rio Summit.<sup>96</sup> Yet there were deeply conflicting contemporary assessments of the Summit, with critics suggesting that the Rio legacy was more akin to the creation of a “global apartheid.”<sup>97</sup> For example, Chatterjee and Finger have argued that the Earth Summit

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<sup>91</sup> Brundtland, *Our Common Future*, pp. 40 – 41.

<sup>92</sup> Haas, ‘UN Conferences and Constructivist Governance of the Environment’, p. 83.

<sup>93</sup> R. Cléménçon, ‘On the Back Burner Again: Environment and Development Politics since the 1992 Rio Conference’, *Journal of Environment and Development*, 13, 2, (2004), p. 112; A. Najam, J. M. Poling, N. Yamagishi, D. G. Straub, J. Sarno, S. M. De Ritter and E. M. Kim, ‘From Rio to Johannesburg: Progress and Prospects’, *Environment*, 44, 7, (2002), p. 29.

<sup>94</sup> D. Osborn, ‘Introduction’, in F. Dodds (ed.), *Earth Summit 2002: A New Deal*, (London; Earthscan, 2001), p. xv. See also Haas, ‘UN Conferences and Constructivist Governance of the Environment’, p. 79; J. Lanchberry, ‘The Rio Earth Summit’, in Dunn, *Diplomacy at the Highest Level*, pp. 220 – 243; and Mebratu, ‘Sustainability and Sustainable Development’, p. 502.

<sup>95</sup> Meadowcroft, ‘Taking Issue with UNCED’s Critics’, p. 410.

<sup>96</sup> Lanchberry, ‘The Rio Earth Summit’, pp. 226 – 233.

<sup>97</sup> Grubb *et al*, *The Earth Summit Agreements*, p. 33. See also Middleton and O’Keefe, *Redefining Sustainable Development*, chapter 3; Paterson, ‘UNCED in the Context of Globalisation’; Thomas, ‘Unsustainable Development?’.

has boosted precisely the type of industrial development that is destructive for the environment, the planet, and its inhabitants. ... as a result of UNCED, the rich will get richer, the poor poorer, while more and more of the planet is destroyed in the process.<sup>98</sup>

The lack of implementation post-Rio also disappointed many involved in the politics of sustainable development, and the Earth Summit II in New York in 1997 was widely regarded as a failure.<sup>99</sup>

Yet despite these criticisms and doubts about the value of summits, they have continued to occupy a pivotal place in the mainstream discourse, suggesting they fulfil more than an instrumental function. Whilst Fomerand argues that “UN conferences do respond to the growing and evident need to deal with problems that can no longer be treated purely from a national perspective”, it is through their theatrical and symbolic function as moments when the global community can unite and stand ‘above politics’ in order to agree on sustainable development that they have become so central to the discourse.<sup>100</sup> As such they have helped to construct a history of sustainable development, which, as Peter Doran observes, has become “a reassuring tale of recurrent moments of spectacular resolve to secure survival.”<sup>101</sup>

### *Production of subjectivities*

Through these practices and forms of knowledge the discourse of sustainable development has empowered and produced new political actors and subjects. The mainstream vision of sustainable development has remained closely wedded to a state-centric model of international politics, and state institutions have been re-invented and expanded as environmental protection agencies. Yet a broader cast of other actors have also been empowered as supporting and co-ordinating agents within the discourse.

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<sup>98</sup> Chatterjee and Finger, *The Earth Brokers*, p. 3.

<sup>99</sup> A. Jordan and H. Voisey, ‘The “Rio Process”: The politics and substantive outcomes of “Earth Summit II”’, *Global Environmental Change*, 8, 1, (1998), pp. 93 – 97; D. Osborn and T. Bigg, *Earth Summit II: Outcomes and Analysis*, (London; Earthscan, 1998).

<sup>100</sup> Fomerand, ‘UN Conferences’, p. 373.

<sup>101</sup> Doran, ‘The Earth Summit’, p. 56.

As *Agenda 21* makes clear, “successful implementation is first and foremost the responsibility of Governments.”<sup>102</sup> The Brundtland Report re-affirmed the primary role of nation-states in the implementation of the discourse, and urges nation-states to “move from their present, often destructive, processes of growth and development onto sustainable development paths.”<sup>103</sup> The active subjects of the Rio Declaration are almost uniquely states, who are urged to eradicate poverty, enact environmental legislation and so on, but ultimately with “the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and developmental policies.”<sup>104</sup> Since the Stockholm conference the impetus to develop national monitoring programmes and environmental departments has meant that many states have been empowered by the discourse as ‘environmental protection agencies’, responsible for their own sustainable development, and have concretised the discourse through national strategies, policy frameworks, government departments and legislative enactments.<sup>105</sup>

Whilst the Rio principles recognised that states had “common but differentiated responsibilities”, rather than framing sustainable development as a competition between North and South the Rio Declaration urged states to “cooperate in a spirit of global partnership.”<sup>106</sup> In order to achieve this global partnership the co-ordinating roles of international institutions, and particularly the UN, was emphasised. Through summits, conferences, conventions, publications and commissions the UN has defined, championed and implemented sustainable development, acting as a focal point for drawing other actors into the discourse, in particular NGOs and the scientific community.<sup>107</sup> As well as being an important producer of the discourse, the emergence of sustainable development has had an impact upon the structure and role of the UN itself, and Mark Imber suggested that “sustainable development may come to acquire the status of a new normative campaign within the UN” which could “create a definitive post-Cold War purpose for the organisation.”<sup>108</sup> Following the

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<sup>102</sup> UN, *Agenda 21*, 1.3.

<sup>103</sup> Brundtland, *Our Common Future*, p. 49.

<sup>104</sup> UN, *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*, principle 2. For an interesting discussion of this theme in relation to Brazil and the Amazon, see the introduction to Kuehls, *Beyond Sovereign Territory*.

<sup>105</sup> Meadowcroft, ‘Sustainable Development’, pp. 373 – 376; Meadowcroft, ‘The Politics of Sustainable Development’, p. 222.

<sup>106</sup> UN, *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*, principle 7.

<sup>107</sup> K. Conca, ‘Greening the United Nations: Environmental Organisations and the UN System’, *Third World Quarterly*, 16, 3, (1995), pp. 441 – 457.

<sup>108</sup> M. Imber, ‘The Environment and the United Nations’, in J. Vogler and M. Imber (eds.), *The Environment and International Relations*, (London; Routledge, 1996), p. 138.

Stockholm Summit, for example, the UNEP was created as an “international environmental watchdog” and both UNEP and the much larger and better-funded UN Development Programme (UNDP) have become important actors for sustainable development within the UN, each publishing major reports embodying the discourse.<sup>109</sup>

In order to assuage some of the mandate clashes between the UNEP and UNDP and to coordinate action for sustainable development within the UN, the Rio Summit created the UN Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) to which both the UNEP and UNDP were accountable. The CSD has become the focal point of the sustainable development discourse within the UN. Described alternatively as “a turgid talking shop” and a “pioneer in many areas”, it was nevertheless at the heart of both the preparations for and the follow-up to the WSSD and demonstrates how the discourse has produced new political actors and spaces.<sup>110</sup>

As well as the UN, other international organisations have been empowered and legitimised by the discourse as supporting or facilitating actors in the implementation of sustainable development. The role of the World Bank has been reinvented as a champion of sustainable development, establishing its own Environment Department in 1987 and a Vice Presidency for Environmentally Sustainable Development in 1993. From only three technical environmental staff in the mid-1980s, by 1994 it had almost 300 and in 1996 the President of the World Bank stated that “we regard the promotion of sustainable development as one of our fundamental objectives.”<sup>111</sup> A number of World Bank publications have contributed to the sustainable development discourse, including *Making Development Sustainable* (1994), *Toward Environmentally Sustainable Development in Sub-Saharan Africa* (1996) and the *World Development Report 2003: Sustainable Development in a Dynamic World* (2003).<sup>112</sup> In these reports the World Bank has set out its view of

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<sup>109</sup> Elliott, *An Introduction to Sustainable Development*, p. 23. Anand and Sen, *Sustainable Human Development*; UNDP, *South Africa Human Development Report 2003: The Challenge of Sustainable Development in South Africa – Unlocking People’s Creativity*, (Oxford; OUP, 2003).

<sup>110</sup> S. Upton, ‘Roadblocks to Agenda 21: A Government Perspective’, in Dodds, *Earth Summit 2002*, p. 5; and F. Dodds, ‘Reforming the International Institutions’, in Dodds, *Earth Summit 2002*, pp. 322 – 324.

<sup>111</sup> J. A. Dixon and A. Steer, ‘The World Bank and the Environment: A Fourfold Agenda’, in I. Serageldin and A. Steer (eds.), *Making Development Sustainable: From Concepts to Action*, (Washington DC; The World Bank, 1994), pp. 125 – 129; J. D. Wolfensohn, ‘Foreword’, in Schmidheiny and Zorraquin, *Financing Change*, p. ix.

<sup>112</sup> Serageldin and Steer, *Making Development Sustainable*; World Bank, *Toward Environmentally Sustainable Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: A World Bank Agenda*, (Washington DC; The World

sustainable development, which is that “without better environmental stewardship, development will be undermined; and without accelerated development in poor countries, environmental policies will fail.”<sup>113</sup> Major World Bank projects now frequently involve environmental and social impact assessments, the creation of biodiversity zones, green development corridors, sustainable livelihood programmes and resource management initiatives.<sup>114</sup>

The World Bank is also the trustee of GEF funds, and cooperates with the UNEP and UNDP in the implementation of projects. According to Zoe Young the GEF has become “a rope in the tug-of-war between UN agencies and the World Bank for the right to take the lead for ‘sustainable development’ and the global environment.”<sup>115</sup> As well as these there are also many other international actors and institutions that have been empowered by the discourse, such as the World Health Organisation, UNESCO, the World Trade Organisation, the International Labour Organisation, and the Food and Agriculture Organisation.<sup>116</sup> Indeed the international architecture of environmental and development governance is now largely structured by the sustainable development discourse.

Integrated by these international institutions into the role of assisting states in the implementation of sustainable development projects, as well as increasingly taking on more diverse roles as lobbyists, technical experts, empowerment agencies and monitors, are a wide range of NGOs and other actors drawn from global civil society or *Agenda 21*’s major groups. *Agenda 21* argued that these actors would be “critical to the effective implementation of the objectives, policies and mechanisms agreed to by states.”<sup>117</sup> Some of the most prominent include the IUCN and the WWF, as well as other environmental organisations such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth International. NGOs such as the Norwegian sustainable development think-tank, ProSus, the London-based International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), the Canadian-based International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and the Washington-based World Resources Institute (WRI)

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Bank, 1996); World Bank, *World Development Report 2003: Sustainable Development in a Dynamic World*, (Washington DC; The World Bank, 2003).

<sup>113</sup> I. Serageldin, ‘Making Development Sustainable’, in Serageldin and Steer, *Making Development Sustainable*, p. 1.

<sup>114</sup> Goldman, ‘The Birth of a Discipline’.

<sup>115</sup> Young, *A New Green Order*, p. 190.

<sup>116</sup> Dodds, ‘Reforming the International Institutions’; Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth*, chapter 7.

<sup>117</sup> UN, *Agenda 21*, 23.1.

have been at the forefront of debating and implementing sustainable development.<sup>118</sup> Business lobbyists like the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) have set out the business case for sustainable development in influential publications such as *Walking the Talk* and *Financing Change*, and have advocated greater private sector participation in the discourse.<sup>119</sup> Organisations nominated to represent a major group have assumed prominent roles in global governance through the sustainable development discourse.

Overall, sustainable development discourse has attempted to re-frame political participation in terms of cooperation rather than conflict. North and South, citizens and states, environmentalists and developers are, according to the logic of sustainable development, now united in pursuit of the same overall goal. For Meadowcroft the concept's greatest success was that it offered a way out of the older "growth versus environment" polarities by functioning as a "bridging concept."<sup>120</sup> Thus "sustainable development was not formulated as either a logical construct or an operational maxim – but rather as a potentially unifying political meta-objective, with a suggestive normative core."<sup>121</sup> According to David Pearce, the concept "survives because it appears to build bridges between the demands of environmentalists and developers."<sup>122</sup> Alan Holland observes that

it is commonly agreed that the Brundtland Report broke the mould by replacing the confrontational and sometimes rancorous debates that had hitherto prevailed with a more constructive approach to environment and development issues. It offered people hope by purporting to show how existing, yet apparently conflicting, aspirations might be harnessed together, and how they might be framed as part of a common goal.<sup>123</sup>

In this sense, the very lack of conceptual or scientific precision at the heart of the concept has had specific political advantages, what diplomats' term "constructive ambiguity."<sup>124</sup> This lack of clarity has "allowed groups with different and often

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<sup>118</sup> Conca, 'Greening the United Nations', p. 444.

<sup>119</sup> C. O. Holliday, S. Schmidheiny and P. Watts, *Walking the Talk: The Business Case for Sustainability*, (Sheffield; Greenleaf Publishing, 2002); Schmidheiny and Zorraquin, *Financing Change*.

<sup>120</sup> Meadowcroft, 'Sustainable Development', p. 370.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, p. 373.

<sup>122</sup> D. Pearce, *Blueprint 3: Measuring Sustainable Development*, (London; Earthscan, 1993), p. 184.

<sup>123</sup> A. Holland, 'Sustainable Development: The Contested Vision', in Lee *et al*, *Global Sustainable Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, p. 1.

<sup>124</sup> J. Robinson, 'Squaring the Circle? Some thoughts on the idea of sustainable development', *Ecological Economics*, 48, (2004), p. 374.



conflicting interests to reach some common ground upon which concrete policies have been developed”, meaning that “sustainable development is a powerful tool for political consensus.”<sup>125</sup> Yet the success of this reconciliation is always only partial and temporary.

### *Tensions within the discourse*

The influence of the sustainable development discourse produced through statements like *Our Common Future*, the Rio Summit and *Agenda 21* is pervasive and has structured how environment and development politics are imagined. Yet the very scope of these statements means they encompass a multiplicity of interpretations and emphases. Therefore assertions that sustainable development “is a ‘motherhood and apple-pie’ concept which everyone supports” can obscure many of the tensions within the discourse.<sup>126</sup> As Whitehead stresses, “while sustainable development may be the dominant international vision of socio-ecological development, other more radical visions and interpretations of sustainability coexist with sustainable development.”<sup>127</sup> This section will draw attention to just two of the most prominent lines of tension within the discourse: between the ‘greens’ and ‘reds’; and between the local and the global.

It is often argued that “it is high time that environmentalists and development activists put aside their differences and joined hands under the banner of sustainable development to tackle the myriad of problems facing us today.”<sup>128</sup> But as Adams has shown, the fundamental reconciliation attempted by sustainable development – to see development issues and environmental concerns as not contradictory but compatible – is one that has had varying degrees of success.<sup>129</sup> The label of ‘greens’ has been applied to those who prioritise the conservation or preservation of biodiversity and

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<sup>125</sup> S. Baker, M. Kousis, D. Richardson and S. Young, ‘Introduction: the theory and practice of sustainable development in EU perspective’, in S. Baker, M. Kousis, D. Richardson and S. Young (eds.), *The Politics of Sustainable Development: Theory, Policy and Practice within the European Union*, (London; Routledge, 1997), pp. 5 and 28.

<sup>126</sup> J. Pezzey, *Sustainable Development Concepts: An Economic Analysis*, (Washington DC; The World Bank, 1992), p. 1.

<sup>127</sup> Whitehead, *Spaces of Sustainability*, p. 26. See also Dobson, ‘Environmental Sustainabilities’.

<sup>128</sup> Lélé, ‘Sustainable Development’, p. 618.

<sup>129</sup> Adams, *Green Development*, chapters 2 and 6.

ecosystems, whilst ‘reds’ refers to those whose primary concerns are more orientated towards development and combating social injustice.<sup>130</sup>

Many greens were dismayed by the Brundtland Report’s espousal of renewed economic growth and its strongly utilitarian and anthropocentric tone, encapsulated by the chapter on biodiversity entitled “Species and Ecosystems: Resources for Development.”<sup>131</sup> Striking a green note in one critique, Wolfgang Sachs has argued that sustainable development “emasculates the environmental challenge by absorbing it into the empty shell of development.”<sup>132</sup> Many environmentalists similarly feel that the discourse of sustainable development has sidelined ecological concerns and has tamed the potentially radical critique of modern industrial society that the environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s posed.<sup>133</sup>

Despite this, green organisations such as WWF, IUCN and UNEP have been at the heart of the discourse and summits such as Stockholm and Rio have tended to be dominated by environmental issues, experts and departments.<sup>134</sup> The conservationist and resource management perspectives that have acquired such a sway over mainstream environmental management have a similarly prominent position within sustainable development practices.<sup>135</sup> The driving role of national environmental departments within sustainable development discourse can be seen in South Africa, where the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) is the leading authority for sustainable development policymaking, and large green environmental organisations such as WWF-SA, IUCN-SA, the Wildlife and Environmental Society of South Africa (WESSA) and the Endangered Wildlife Trust

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<sup>130</sup> Examples of these labels being used in the South African context include J. Cock and E. Koch (eds.), *Going Green: People, Politics and the Environment in South Africa*, (Cape Town; OUP, 1991); J. Cock, ‘Connecting the Red, Brown and Green: The Environmental Justice Movement in South Africa’, in Ballard *et al*, *Voices of Protest*, pp. 203 – 234; and C. H. Vogel and J. H. Drummond, ‘Shades of “green” and “brown”: Environmental Issues in South Africa’, in A. Lemon (ed.), *The Geography of Change in South Africa*, (Chichester; Wiley, 1995), pp. 85 – 98.

<sup>131</sup> Brundtland, *Our Common Future*, pp. 50 – 51, and chapter 6. For critiques, see T. de la Court, *Beyond Brundtland: Green Development in the 1990s*, (tr. E. Bayens and N. Harle), (London; Zed Books, 1990); A. Dobson, ‘Sustainable Development and the Defence of the Natural World’, in Lee *et al*, *Global Sustainable Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, pp. 49 – 60; Langhelle, ‘Sustainable Development’, pp. 135 – 138; Robinson, ‘Squaring the Circle?’, p. 373; Sachs, *Planet Dialectics*, chapter 5.

<sup>132</sup> Sachs, *Planet Dialectics*, p. 34.

<sup>133</sup> Blühdorn and Welsh, ‘Eco-Politics Beyond the Paradigm of Sustainability’; Hajer and Fischer, ‘Beyond Global Discourse’.

<sup>134</sup> Najam, ‘Developing Countries and Global Environmental Governance’.

<sup>135</sup> R. B. Norgaard, *Development Betrayed: The End of Progress and a Coevolutionary Revisioning of the Future*, (London; Routledge, 1994); R. Guha and J. M. Alier, *Varieties of Environmentalism: Essays North and South*, (London; Earthscan, 1997).

(EWT) have driven the implementation of sustainable development projects. The prominent position of these actors has given sustainable development a particularly green tinge in South Africa, with dominant concerns centring on conserving environmental resources such as areas of national parkland and wilderness in the interests of national and international tourism.<sup>136</sup> As a result high value has been placed upon scientific and managerial forms of expert knowledge, particularly the disciplines of resource conservation and park management; and as a legacy of racist and authoritarian conservation policies under Apartheid and the social and economic exclusion of the black population from tourism, white, well-off, well-educated groups have tended to be over-represented in the sector.<sup>137</sup>

Partly as a result of such characteristics there has been considerable scepticism that sustainable development apparently involves privileged groups (white Europeans and North Americans, scientists, tourists, and the wealthy) prioritising wildlife and trees ahead of the poorest and most marginalised sections of society. The 'red' critique was forcefully articulated by Albie Sachs, the South African anti-Apartheid hero and Constitutional Court judge, who observed in 1990 that "it is undeniably distasteful to spend huge sums on saving the white rhino when millions of black children are starving."<sup>138</sup> From this perspective the environmentalist assertion of limits and questioning of economic growth is angrily rejected, for example by David Pearce who argues that "anti-growth advocates are embarrassingly silent or unrealistic on how they would solve problems of poverty and unemployment."<sup>139</sup>

In this vein sustainable development summits have attracted critical assessments from both developing country politicians and many academics, with the

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<sup>136</sup> W. Beinart and P. Coates, *Environment and History: The Taming of Nature in the USA and South Africa*, (London; Routledge, 1995). The joint mandate of DEAT as environmental affairs and tourism is revealing in this regard.

<sup>137</sup> G. Benneh, W. B. Morgan, and J. I. Uitto (eds.), *Sustaining the Future: Economic, Social, and Environmental Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, (Tokyo; UNUP, 1996); Cock, 'Connecting the Red, Brown and Green'; F. Khan, 'The Roots of Environmental Racism and the Rise of Environmental Justice in the 1990s', in D. A. McDonald (ed.), *Environmental Justice in South Africa*, (Athens; Ohio University Press, 2002), pp. 15 – 48; Mittelman, 'Globalisation and Environmental Resistance Politics', p. 850.

<sup>138</sup> Quoted in Bond, *Unsustainable South Africa*, p. 421.

<sup>139</sup> Pearce, *Blueprint 3*, p. 4. US anti-environmentalism has been particularly fierce. David Pepper quotes an American car-bumper sticker: "if you're hungry and out of work – go eat an environmentalist!" D. Pepper, *The Roots of Modern Environmentalism*, (London; Croom Helm, 1984), p. 13. During the 1992 election campaign George Bush Snr famously branded Al Gore "Ozone Man" and bizarrely claimed that if Clinton-Gore were elected "we'll be up to our neck in owls". M. Kakutani, 'Al Gore Revisits Global Warming, With Passionate Warnings and Pictures', *New York Times* (US), 23/05/2006.

editors of one collected volume noting that “what is striking about UNCED is how far the agenda had been turned ‘green’ and anti-developmental in the five years from the Brundtland Report.”<sup>140</sup> Middleton and O’Keefe argued that both *Our Common Future* and the Rio Summit had “fundamentally environmentalistic origins”, and that “the capitalist powers had brought off a sleight of hand by largely removing not only poverty from the Rio agenda, but even removing people from it.”<sup>141</sup>

Yet this long-running tension between greens and reds has been at least partially reframed by the sustainable development discourse, which has sought to demonstrate that “ecology and economy are becoming ever more interwoven – locally, regionally, nationally, and globally – into a seamless net of causes and effects.”<sup>142</sup> A similar re-framing has been attempted through ‘brown’ articulations of environmental justice, with American and South African movements in particular highlighting the connections between environmental degradation and social injustice.<sup>143</sup> By re-defining the environment as ‘where we all live’, the brown agenda has focussed on the health impacts of mining, toxic waste, nuclear power, mercury poisoning, asbestos, poverty, water pollution, and urban and workplace issues.<sup>144</sup> Campaigns against toxic dumping, air pollution and the location of dirty industries have highlighted that environmental risks disproportionately affect the poorest sections of society.<sup>145</sup> Similar charges are made by those who have drawn parallels between the exploitation of the poor, the exploitation of nature, and the exploitation of women, with Vandana Shiva claiming that “the marginalisation of women and the destruction of biodiversity go hand in hand.”<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Kirkby *et al*, *The Earthscan Reader in Sustainable Development*, p. 10. See also Najam, ‘Developing Countries and Global Environmental Governance’.

<sup>141</sup> Middleton and O’Keefe, *Redefining Sustainable Development*, pp. 38 – 40.

<sup>142</sup> Brundtland, *Our Common Future*, p. 5.

<sup>143</sup> For the environmental justice movement in the US, see D. Harvey, ‘The Environment of Justice’, in Fischer and Hajer, *Living With Nature*, pp. 156 – 158; and D. Schlosberg, *Environmental Justice and the New Pluralism*, (Oxford; OUP, 1999). For a discussion of the environmental justice movement in South Africa see McDonald, *Environmental Justice in South Africa*.

<sup>144</sup> Cock, ‘Connecting the Red, Brown and Green’; J. Cock and D. Fig, ‘The Impact of Globalisation on Environmental Politics, 1990-2002’, *African Sociological Review*, 5, 2, (2001), pp. 15 – 35; Cock and Koch, *Going Green*; and D. A. MacDonald, ‘Introduction: What is Environmental Justice?’, in McDonald, *Environmental Justice in South Africa*, pp. 1 – 12.

<sup>145</sup> D. Fig, *Uranium Road: Questioning South Africa’s Nuclear Direction*, (Johannesburg; Heinrich Böll Foundation, 2004); Harvey, ‘The Environment of Justice’, pp. 156 – 158.

<sup>146</sup> V. Shiva, ‘Women’s Indigenous Knowledge and Biodiversity Conservation’, in Mies and Shiva, *Ecofeminism*, p. 164. See also V. Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, (London; Routledge, 1993); and J. Turpin and L. A. Lorentzen (eds.), *The Gendered New World Order: Militarism, Development and the Environment*, (London; Routledge, 1996).

In South Africa the emergence of the brown movement is often dated to the 1992 Earthlife Africa Conference “What does it mean to be Green?”<sup>147</sup> This conference drew heavily on *Agenda 21* and gave rise to the EJNF which, together with Earthlife Africa and the Durban-based GroundWork, are regarded as “the key nodes or hubs” of the environmental justice movement.<sup>148</sup> These groups have tended to be more confrontational and radical than the greens, sceptical of cooperation with private companies and more at home linking with social movements mobilising amongst the poorest sections of society.<sup>149</sup> As a result, the political, ideological, and organisational tensions between the ‘greens’, ‘reds’ and ‘browns’ have constituted a long-running fault-line which the broader sustainable development discourse has continually re-negotiated with varying degrees of success.

Another key line of tension within the sustainable development discourse is the relationship between the global and local. As shown above, mainstream visions of sustainable development have sought to bring the entire planet into view, claiming a common human interest and shared future at moments like global summits. For many environment and development activists however, these global claims are misleading. For Shiva the apparent globalism of sustainable development “does not represent the universal human interest, it represents a particular local and parochial interest which has been globalised through the scope of its reach.”<sup>150</sup> In this vein some questioned whether the WSSD would work in favour of “the globalised rich” or “the localised poor.”<sup>151</sup> Such concerns mirror those of political and global ecology perspectives, which often stress that “the reversal of ecological decline involves strengthening local rights.”<sup>152</sup>

This scalar tension is reflected in the familiar slogan ‘Think Global, Act Local’. Despite the apparently global significance of the discourse many of those

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<sup>147</sup> MacDonald, ‘Introduction’.

<sup>148</sup> Cock, ‘Connecting the Red, Brown and Green’, p. 204.

<sup>149</sup> Interview with Des D’Sa, Chairman of the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, (Durban, 15/12/2006); interview with Bobby Peek, Director of Groundwork, (Durban, 07/12/2006); and interview with Richard Worthington, Earthlife Africa, (Johannesburg, 31/10/2006).

<sup>150</sup> V. Shiva, ‘The Greening of the Global Reach’, in Sachs, *Global Ecology*, p. 150.

<sup>151</sup> R. Hamann, Z. Patel and M. Pressend, ‘Competing Visions and Conflicting Priorities: A Southern African Perspective on the World Summit’, *Environment*, 44, 6, (2002), p. 14.

<sup>152</sup> Shiva, ‘The Greening of the Global Reach’, p. 155. See also Chatterjee and Finger, *The Earth Brokers*, pp. 8 – 9; R. Keil, D. V. J. Bell, P. Benz and L. Fawcett (eds.), *Political Ecology: Global and Local*, (London; Routledge, 1998); E. Leff, ‘Sustainable Development in Developing Countries: Cultural Diversity and Instrumental Rationality’, in Lee *et al*, *Global Sustainable Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, pp. 62 – 75; Norgaard, *Development Betrayed*; M. Paterson, ‘Globalisation, Ecology, and Resistance’, *New Political Economy*, 4, 1, (1999), pp. 129 – 145; Paterson, *Understanding Global Environmental Politics*, pp. 55 – 58 and 154 – 161; Peet and Watts, *Liberation Ecologies*.

involved in the study of sustainable development have chosen to focus on local or regional-level case studies.<sup>153</sup> *Agenda 21* promoted local initiatives through the *Local Agenda 21* which was endorsed in chapter 28 and has been carried forward by the Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) association.<sup>154</sup> Even the planetary vision of *Our Common Future* acknowledged that “no single blueprint of sustainability will be found, as economic and social systems and ecological conditions differ widely among countries.”<sup>155</sup>

These lines of tension therefore demonstrate the degree to which the discourse of sustainable development encompasses and reabsorbs critiques, continually being reinvented in different contexts and locations. Despite these variations and tensions between green, brown and red, global and local, sustainable development remains fundamentally a discourse which asserts the need to manage and govern social, economic and environmental issues for the good of people and planet. It is a response to the recognition that, as Foucault saw, “what might be called a society’s ‘threshold of modernity’ has been reached when the life of the species is wagered on its own political strategies.”<sup>156</sup> From the perspective of the sustainable development discourse the survival of the human species now depends on the ability to manage social, economic and environmental relationships successfully. Different articulations of the discourse have different views on which techniques, according to what standards of truth, and by whom this should happen, but the overriding feature of the discourse is the assertion that global sustainable development needs to be governed and managed.

### *Sustainable development as eco-governmentality*

The imperative to govern the social, economic and environmental aspects of modern life is at the heart of the discourse of sustainable development. This has

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<sup>153</sup> C. Oelofse and Z. Patel, ‘Falling through the Net: Sustainability in Clermont Township, Durban’, *South African Geographical Journal*, 82, 2, (2000), pp. 35 – 43; Z. Patel, ‘Rethinking Sustainable Development in the Post-Apartheid Reconstruction of South African Cities’, *Local Environment*, 5, 4, (2000), pp. 383 – 399; D. Simon, ‘Regional Development-Environment Discourses, Policies and Practices in Post-Apartheid South Africa’, in J. A. Grant and F. Söderbaum (eds.), *The New Regionalism in Africa*, (Aldershot; Ashgate, 2003), pp. 67 – 89.

<sup>154</sup> UN, *Agenda 21*, 28; J. Meadowcroft, ‘The Politics of Sustainable Development’, pp. 231 – 233.

<sup>155</sup> Brundtland, *Our Common Future*, p. 40.

<sup>156</sup> Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, p. 143.

tended to produce academic engagements with the subject that focus on how this government can be managed most successfully or efficiently. For political scientists such as Lafferty and Meadowcroft, for example, “politics constitutes the key mediating mechanism through which human societies can self-consciously adjust social practices into less environmentally destructive patterns.”<sup>157</sup> Whilst such problem-solving approaches remain popular and important, others have sought to examine more critically the assumptions and political effects of the discourse.<sup>158</sup> By extending the Foucauldian focus on the population to a consideration of how the global environment is brought within the realm of government, a number of authors have approached sustainable development through eco-governmentality, green governmentality or environmentality perspectives.<sup>159</sup>

Such approaches have shown how modern techniques of government have worked to bring an active ‘Nature’ under human management as the passive ‘environment’. For example, Luke reads the work of the WorldWatch Institute as a “continuous attempt to reinvent the forces of Nature in the economic exploitation of advanced technologies”, and “the disciplinary construction of various modes of bio-power in promoting the growth of human populations.”<sup>160</sup> This leads him to raise doubts “about the apparently benign intentions of environmental actions, given the disciplinary propensities of the practices embedded in this new regime of environmentality.”<sup>161</sup> For Luke such NGOs “operate as a green panopticon, enclosing Nature in rings of centered normalising super-vision”, in order to dominate, exclude

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<sup>157</sup> W. M. Lafferty and J. Meadowcroft, ‘Democracy and the environment: congruence and conflict – preliminary reflections’, in W. M. Lafferty and J. Meadowcroft (eds.), *Democracy and the Environment: Problems and Prospects*, (Cheltenham; Edward Elgar, 1996), p. 2.

<sup>158</sup> Although not taking an explicitly Foucauldian perspective, authors such as Mathew Paterson have adopted a critical approach to global environmental governance, accusing mainstream problem-solving international relations literature of depoliticising the subject, taking ‘improvements in environmental quality’ to be a self-evidently obvious normative goal and a state-centric position as unproblematic. Paterson, *Understanding Global Environmental Politics*, p. 2; and M. Paterson, ‘Radicalizing Regimes? Ecology and the critique of IR theory’, in Macmillan and Linklater, *Boundaries in Question*, pp. 212 – 227. See also P. Newell, ‘The Political Economy of Global Environmental Governance’, *Review of International Studies*, 34, 3, (2008), pp. 507 – 529.

<sup>159</sup> Agrawal, *Environmentality*; A. Baldwin, ‘The Nature of the Boreal Forest: Governmentality and Forest-Nature’, *Space and Culture*, 6, 4, (2003), pp. 415 – 428; C. Death, ‘Resisting (nuclear) Power? Environmental Regulation in South Africa’, *Review of African Political Economy*, 109, (2006), pp. 407 – 424; M. Goldman, ‘Constructing an Environmental State: Eco-governmentality and other Transnational Practices of ‘Green’ World Bank’, *Social Problems*, 48, 4, (2001), pp. 499 – 523; A. Gupta, *Postcolonial Developments: Agriculture in the Making of Modern India*, (London; Duke University Press, 1998); Luke, ‘Environmentality as Green Governmentality’; Luke, ‘On Environmentality’

<sup>160</sup> Luke, ‘On Environmentality’, p. 58.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid*, p. 58.

and repress people and the environment.<sup>162</sup> In a similar vein, he suggests elsewhere that the environmental movement is the latest in a “solid series of statist practices beginning in the eighteenth century”, and is the means by which “the bio-power of the entire planet, not just human beings” has been brought under “the strategic ambit of state power.”<sup>163</sup> He concludes by questioning whether “sustainable development discourse [is] anything more than an eco-knowledge of/by/for the modern capitalist mode of production”, arguing that “environments are spaces under police supervision, expert management or technocratic control; hence, by taking environmentalistic agendas into the heart of state policy, one finds the ultimate meaning of the police state fulfilled.”<sup>164</sup> The model of eco-governmentality exposed here is, according to Luke, a repressive and exploitative one, which works to dominate people and nature in the interests of political elites, science and capital.

In contrast to this view of eco-governmentality as a statist, repressive, dominating form of power, other discussions of eco-governmentality have drawn attention to how government operates through the production of particular subjects. Gupta, for example, shows how new “postcolonial spaces” are being created between the global and the local and how “the ‘unbundled’ space in which these forms of governance are exercised creates its own possibilities for opposition to coalesce.”<sup>165</sup> He discusses “environmentalism as a new disciplinary technology”, and concludes that “we may be witnessing the birth of a new regime of discipline in which governmentality is un-hitched from the nation-state to be instituted anew on the global scale.”<sup>166</sup> Similarly Bryant draws attention to the ways in which different forms of subjectivity are produced in his analysis of NGOs in the Philippines, concluding that they “have been central to a process whereby hitherto ‘peripheral’ people and biota are brought within the remit of political rationalities of control and surveillance.”<sup>167</sup>

These eco-governmentality approaches therefore draw attention to the bio-political and disciplinary tendencies within the discourse of sustainable development: the bringing of “life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations.”<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid, p. 77.

<sup>163</sup> Luke, ‘Environmentality as Green Governmentality’, p. 122.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, pp. 138 and 149.

<sup>165</sup> Gupta, *Postcolonial Developments*, p. 326.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid, pp. 294 and 321.

<sup>167</sup> R. L. Bryant, ‘Non-Governmental Organisations and Governmentality: ‘Consuming’ Biodiversity and Indigenous People in the Philippines’, *Political Studies*, 50, (2002), p. 275.

<sup>168</sup> Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, p. 143.



Disciplinary forms of government produce regulated and monitored subjects over whom rule is exercised, and sustainable development is regarded as having extended statist, interventionist forms of rule to the planetary and ecological levels. However, these accounts do not exhaust the insights of a governmentality analysis, indeed they do not fully draw out the ways in which, for Foucault, governmental forms of power work through the creation of free, rational individuals and actors who are both the subjects and objects of government, and operate at a distance from traditional centres of authority.<sup>169</sup> More along these lines, Agrawal sets out to explain “why, when, how, and in what measure people come to develop an environmentally orientated subject position” through community-based environmental management schemes in rural India.<sup>170</sup> He describes in detail how forests and local communities have been governed in India through the creation of environmental subjects, “governmentalised localities” and “regulatory communities.”<sup>171</sup> As such, rather than solely the disciplining and repressive effects of eco-governmentality, he is interested in the ways that the “very individuality that is supposed to be constrained by the exercise of power may actually be its effect.”<sup>172</sup> In another account of how processes of eco-governmentality are implicated in new forms of power and rule, Goldman has shown how World Bank development projects such as the Nam Theun II dam in Laos specifically target rural and marginalised communities, “compelling them to participate in the new neo-liberal process of eco-government.”<sup>173</sup> Drawing attention to the production of fragmented, stratified and transnationalised environmental states in the global South, Goldman shows how World Bank programmes of capacity-building and knowledge transfer have produced a situation where “the modern eco-rational subject and the environmental state are being mutually constituted.”<sup>174</sup>

A similar sensitivity to processes through which actors are empowered and subjects created is displayed by Oels in analysing the changing ways in which ‘the climate’ has been rendered governable. She suggests that “shifts in the discourses and practices of climate change should be understood in terms of a shift of

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<sup>169</sup> Foucault, ‘Governmentality’.

<sup>170</sup> Agrawal, *Environmentality*, pp. 2 – 3.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid, p. 217.

<sup>173</sup> Goldman, ‘Constructing an Environmental State’, p. 503.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid, p. 516.

governmentality from bio-power to advanced liberal government in Western industrialised countries.”<sup>175</sup> She clarifies that

climate change as framed by bio-power creates the basis for justifying far-ranging policy interventions and even the extension of state power in the name of ‘survival’ of life on planet Earth. Advanced liberal government, on the other hand, renders climate change governable as an issue of state failure requiring market-based solutions or the creation of markets.<sup>176</sup>

The form of governance represented by the Kyoto Protocol, Oels argues, relies on “market-based solutions that spur technological innovation and economic growth”, thereby constructing the broader population as active participants in governance-via-markets, rather than as passive objects of discipline or regulation.<sup>177</sup>

Whilst the analysis of Luke and others highlights the sovereign and disciplinary dimensions of sustainable development, the work of Agrawal, Goldman and Oels draws attention to the ways in which discourses of environmentalism and sustainable development empower free, economically and ecologically rational subjects as part of broader patterns of advanced liberal government. Rather than a linear progression through sovereign, disciplinary and governmental forms of power, an eco-governmentality perspective draws attention to the different balances and combinations between these rationalities of power in particular forms of rule.<sup>178</sup>

Approaching sustainable development from an eco-governmentality perspective is therefore primarily analytical rather than normative, and means moving away from the strident condemnation of modern environmentalism as repressive and statist. Eric Darier notes as much in his discussion of the Canadian Green Plan from an eco-governmentality perspective, observing that “one cannot answer the abstract question whether the Green Plan is good or bad.”<sup>179</sup> By showing how the Green Plan sought to produce environmentally responsible citizens who would take greater

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<sup>175</sup> A. Oels, ‘Rendering Climate Change Governable: From Biopower to Advanced Liberal Governmentality’, *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning*, 7, 3, (2005), p. 186.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid, p. 201.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> This is particularly well demonstrated by Kuehls who shows how the practice of sovereignty has historically been predicated on governmental rationalities. For example, sovereign claims to possess land in the New World rested on the capacity and knowledge to use land in a certain productive way, and the occupation of land by Native Americans who did not till or pasture the land did not, in the eyes of the settlers, grant them sovereign rights over it. Kuehls, *Beyond Sovereign Territory*; and T. Kuehls, ‘The Environment of Sovereignty’, in Magnusson and Shaw, *A Political Space*, pp. 179 – 197.

<sup>179</sup> E. Darier, ‘Environmental Governmentality: The Case of Canada’s Green Plan’, *Environmental Politics*, 5, 4, (1996), p. 603.

ownership of their actions, he suggests that “the Green Plan could be one of the conditions for the subsequent emergence of radically different green subjectivities and a step toward the greater disciplining of the population on global scale.”<sup>180</sup> Environmentalists, or those deeply attached to the sustainable development project, might well regard such processes of eco-governmentality as necessary and desirable. An analytics of government perspective, however, would always be alert to the potential dangers implicit in such rationalities.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter has argued that sustainable development can be understood as a discourse, rather than as a precise concept or scientific term. By asserting that environmental degradation and economic and social underdevelopment are mutually re-producing sustainable development has redefined dominant approaches to these issues. Constituted through key texts such as *Our Common Future*, *Caring for the Earth* and *Agenda 21*, and moments like the Rio Summit, it has established certain ways of viewing global politics, authorised particular forms of knowledge and techniques for implementing sustainable development, and has empowered certain actors to achieve it.

As conceived in *Our Common Future*, sustainable development is a discourse rooted in social democratic traditions of interventionist global government. The Brundtland Commission was influenced by the discussions of North-South economic development and international security in the Brandt and Palme reports of the early 1980s, and they shared the internationalist and cosmopolitan outlook indicated by their similar titles.<sup>181</sup> The Brundtland Report urged governments, supported by civil society and co-ordinated by international institutions, to take greater control of social, economic and environmental policies, thereby establishing a global field of governmental visibility. Population, pollution, energy and food supplies would all require active management according to this rationality of government. The discourse

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> W. Brandt, *Common Crisis: North-South Cooperation for World Recovery*, (London; Pan Books, 1983); O. Palme, *Common Security: A Blueprint for Survival*, (New York; Simon and Schuster, 1982).

of sustainable development therefore extended and expanded the remit of development, bringing new concerns and issues to light, but without fundamentally changing the state-centric, disciplinary, bio-political model of government on which it was based. The predominant focus of the discourse has been on environmental factors and it has been driven by authorised experts within the disciplines of environmental management and green economics. The natural sciences, economics, and security technologies have been enlisted to monitor, assess, regulate and manage sustainable development, and as such it has relied heavily upon disciplinary modes of power: surveillance, monitoring, economic planning and environmental legislation, to the degree that, according to Luke, “the bio-power of the entire planet, not just human beings” has been brought under “the strategic ambit of state power.”<sup>182</sup>

Yet more governmental forms of power co-exist with these disciplinary technologies. Through techniques of public participation and the construction of major groups, civil society actors have been created and inserted into these policy processes and techniques of power. One site in which sovereign, disciplinary and governmental rationalities have been manifested has been the UN summit, established as an authoritative moment for the production of sustainable development discourse. For Chasek and Sherman, “these summits and conferences were intended to form a set of interconnected global plans to move the world towards a more sustainable future.”<sup>183</sup> A united global community was constructed through moments like Rio, coming together to agree on ways to secure the fragile planet, above the petty differences of day-to-day politics. As Maurice Strong, Conference Secretary-General at Rio, later reflected,

as an event in itself, the Earth Summit was clearly remarkable, perhaps even historic. Never before had so many of the world’s political leaders come together in one place, and the fact that they came to consider the urgent question of our planet’s future put these issues under an enormous spotlight. We arranged that I would have them for one hour without assistants, without support staff, without ministers, in a room – just the leaders and myself and Boutros-Ghali, who was then the Secretary-General. During that hour I had the sense that they really accepted the premise that the issues they had come to Rio to address were literally more important for the future of their people than most of the things that were actually preoccupying their own particular national agendas at the time.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Luke, ‘Environmentality as Green Governmentality’, p. 122.

<sup>183</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 34.

<sup>184</sup> M. Strong, ‘Global Sustainable Development’, in S. Vertovec and D. Posey (eds.), *Globalization, Globalism, Environments and Environmentalism: Consciousness of Connections*, (Oxford; OUP, 2003), p. 106.

For Strong and many others it was only through such gatherings of state leaders, face-to-face, that a sustainable future could be secured.

Yet, as has been only too obvious at moments like Stockholm, Rio and New York, the politics of sustainable development implies contradictions, disagreements and heated disputes about exactly what is to be sustained, how, by whom and for how long. It is an essentially contested concept, since it advances “conflicting moral and political commitments between which reason cannot arbitrate.”<sup>185</sup> Greens, browns and reds disagree over the balance between the three legs of the tripod, as well as the relationship between science and politics, consensus and conflict. Some articulations stress the need to think globally, others the priority of acting locally. Despite these tensions, the discourse has proved remarkably elastic, and as a broad rationality of government it remains an imperative which many institutions, programmes and groups adhere to. As Sachs has argued,

Shell together with Greenpeace, the World Bank as well as the anti-dam movement invoke ‘sustainable development’; few outrightly deny the concept. On the contrary, the idea works like an all-purpose cement, gluing everybody together, friends and foes alike.<sup>186</sup>

The degree to which this discourse is shared by diverse groups means that battles over its meaning and application are often intense and their results can have profound political effects. The WSSD was convened in Johannesburg, ten years after Rio and fifteen after the Brundtland Report, and it stood as a privileged and authoritative moment for the re-shaping of sustainable development. The next three chapters of the thesis show how the WSSD re-orientated the discourse of sustainable development, highlight the evolving role of summitry within global politics, and explore how dominant forms of government were contested and protested in Johannesburg.

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<sup>185</sup> J. N. Gray, ‘On the Contestability of Social and Political Concepts’, *Political Theory*, 5, 3, (1977), p. 334.

<sup>186</sup> W. Sachs, (ed.), *The Jo’burg Memo: Fairness in a Fragile World*, (Berlin; Heinrich Böll Foundation, 2002), p. 10.

## Chapter 3

# Negotiating Sustainable Development:

From a global deal to partnerships at the WSSD

*This Summit will be remembered not for the treaties, the commitments, or the declarations it produced, but for the first stirrings of a new way of governing the global commons – the beginnings of a shift from the stiff formal waltz of traditional diplomacy to the jazzier dance of improvisational solution-oriented partnerships that may include non-government organisations, willing governments and other stakeholders.*

**Jonathan Lash, 2002<sup>1</sup>**

### *Introduction*

The WSSD officially opened on 26 August 2002 in the Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg, and ran until 2 September. It was the culmination of a preparatory process that had begun well over two years previously and involved a multitude of participants, debates and competing agendas. The complex negotiations can be interpreted in terms of two alternative approaches to sustainable development: campaigns for a multilateral ‘Global Deal’ on the one hand, and flexible, bilateral, voluntary partnerships on the other. These were more than different negotiating tactics or competing preferences for mechanisms of implementation. Rather, they constituted alternative rationalities of government which articulated specific visions of the scope and ends of sustainable development, the purpose and means of implementation, and the types of actor and political agent required. Whereas Luke has characterised sustainable development as a disciplinary and bio-political form of government, this chapter argues that the predominance of the partnerships approach in the

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<sup>1</sup> World Resources Institute, *News Release: WRI expresses disappointment over many WSSD outcomes*, (Washington DC, 04/09/2002).

Johannesburg outcomes re-orientated sustainable development discourse toward forms of advanced liberal government.<sup>2</sup>

The WSSD was preceded by preparatory committee meetings (PrepComs) at which most of the negotiations were conducted. The first PrepCom meeting was held in New York in April–May 2001, and it was followed by regional PrepComs held in Europe, Africa, Latin America and Asia. The second global PrepCom was held in January–February 2002 and PrepCom III was in March–April 2002, both in New York. PrepCom IV was held in Bali in Indonesia in May–June 2002. Delegates left Bali with almost a quarter of the text unresolved, and so substantive negotiations also took place in Johannesburg between diplomats, ministerial heads of delegation, and finally heads-of-state.<sup>3</sup> The thematic content of the negotiations was based around reviewing progress since Rio, identifying new challenges, and renewing “political commitment and support for sustainable development.”<sup>4</sup> In May 2002 Kofi Annan provided a more specific focus for the WSSD in the form of his WEHAB agenda, which identified water, energy, health, agriculture and biodiversity as “five specific areas where concrete results are both essential and achievable.”<sup>5</sup>

Debates over the form of the eventual Summit agreements emerged early in the process when a paper presented at PrepCom II by the Summit’s UN Secretariat proposed alternative ‘Type I’ and ‘Type II’ outcomes.<sup>6</sup> The paper suggested that

Type I outcomes would be in the form of documents to be negotiated by all States during the Preparatory Committee process and would assess overall progress achieved since Rio, identify major constraints and suggest measures to overcome these constraints.<sup>7</sup>

The Type I outcomes were multilateral, consensually negotiated texts, specifically the Johannesburg *Political Declaration*, a 37-point document reaffirming the global commitment to sustainable development drafted primarily by the South African

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<sup>2</sup> Luke, ‘Environmentality as Green Governmentality’; Luke, ‘On Environmentality’.

<sup>3</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 90.

<sup>4</sup> UN, *Resolution 55/199*, #3.

<sup>5</sup> The speech at which he announced the WEHAB agenda was given at the American Museum of Natural History’s annual environmental lecture, on 14/05/2002, and is published in K. A. Annan, ‘Towards a Sustainable Future’, *Environment*, 44, 7, (2002), pp. 10 – 15.

<sup>6</sup> Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development: Brainstorming Session*, 22, 9, (Manitoba; International Institute for Sustainable Development, 19/01/2002), p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 83.

Government, and the multilaterally negotiated *Plan of Implementation*, a 170-paragraph global blueprint for the implementation of *Agenda 21*.<sup>8</sup>

However, in addition to these negotiated texts, delegates agreed that a number of non-negotiated partnerships, or Type II outcomes, would be formally accredited as recognised outcomes of the Summit.

Type II outcomes would consist of a series of commitments, targets and partnerships made by individual governments or groups of governments, at the regional and/or inter-regional level, as well as with involvement of or among major groups ... this type of outcome would not have to be negotiated in the Preparatory Committee with involvement of all States, and would be developed and agreed upon only among the parties involved.<sup>9</sup>

These partnerships were not new in the sense that such partnerships for implementation have long existed as tools of governance; however, their inclusion as official accredited outcomes of a UN summit was groundbreaking.<sup>10</sup>

The UN position in Johannesburg was that these two types of outcomes were not competing alternatives, rather that Type II agreements should complement commitments made by governments instead of replacing them.<sup>11</sup> Yet such a balanced view was not shared by many Summit participants, and the US delegation's enthusiasm for partnerships and hostility to new multilateral agreements was undisguised. They were joined on many issues by what is known as the JUSCANZ group: Japan, US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. On the other hand G77 and EU delegations often tended to press for stricter multilateral commitments and targets.

This chapter argues that the proposals for a Global Deal relied upon more regulatory, hierarchical and disciplinary forms of power, whereas the partnerships approach represented a form of advanced liberal governmentality, committed to governing through free, empowered, responsible actors. The eventual predominance of the latter at the WSSD reflected and encouraged broader trends in sustainable

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<sup>8</sup> UN, *The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development*, adopted at the WSSD 17th plenary meeting on 04/09/2002, (Johannesburg; UN, 2002); and UN, *Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, adopted at the WSSD 17th plenary meeting, on 04/09/2002 (Johannesburg; UN, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, pp. 83 – 84.

<sup>10</sup> Burg, 'The World Summit on Sustainable Development', p. 112; M. H. Ivanova, 'Partnerships, International Organisations and Global Environmental Governance', in Witte *et al*, *Progress or Peril?*, p. 15 – 17; La Viña *et al*, 'The Outcomes of Johannesburg', pp. 57 – 58; Martens, *Multistakeholder Partnerships*, p. 16.

<sup>11</sup> UN, *Guiding Principles for Partnerships for Sustainable Development ('type 2 outcomes') to be Elaborated by Interested Parties in the Context of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)*, Explanatory note by the Vice-Chairs Jan Kara and Diane Quarless, 07/06/2002.



development discourse and produced particular political effects. By highlighting these effects, this chapter seeks to draw attention to the inherently political character of these rationalities of government.

### *A new 'Global Deal' at the WSSD?*

Early in the diplomatic process proposals emerged for striking a new 'Global Deal' in Johannesburg which would involve restructuring global political and economic power relationships. These proposals never acquired a tight, structured coherence but rather constituted a looser ensemble of various visions which, despite their differences, shared a desire to reinvigorate commitments to sustainable development as articulated in *Our Common Future* and *Agenda 21*, and catalyse political action to secure the planetary population.

The Danish delegation were the first to advocate a Global Deal during the PrepCom process and their non-paper (so-called in UN diplomacy because they are informal suggestions, rather than concrete negotiating proposals) was circulated at the European Regional Ministerial Meeting in September 2001 to an enthusiastic reception.<sup>12</sup> It focussed on better market access for developing countries, improved development assistance and debt relief, and the transfer of sustainable technology.<sup>13</sup> Subsequently the South African government also began to champion the idea of a Global Deal, publishing two non-papers in 2002 entitled *From Rio to Johannesburg* and *People, Planet, Prosperity*.<sup>14</sup> They called for "fundamental structural changes" in order to "define a new relationship between the north and south for sustainable development."<sup>15</sup> These structural changes involved "fair access for the South to the markets of the North"; "adequate instruments for countries in the South to manage adjustment costs of trade reform"; "measures to stabilise international financial flows, encourage longer-term investment in developing countries, provide debt relief where necessary to bring about sustainable development, and improve the quantity and

<sup>12</sup> Denmark, *Non-paper*; see also Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development: UNECE Regional Ministerial Meeting*, 22, 4, (Manitoba; International Institute for Sustainable Development, 28/09/2001), pp. 8 – 9.

<sup>13</sup> Denmark, *Non-paper*.

<sup>14</sup> South Africa, *From Rio to Johannesburg*; and DEAT, *People, Planet, Prosperity*.

<sup>15</sup> South Africa, *From Rio to Johannesburg*, pp. 2 and 5.

quality of ODA”; “more open and democratic multilateral agencies”; and “programmes to ensure that efforts to protect the environment in the North do not shift dirty or unhealthy production processes to the South.”<sup>16</sup> Through its support for the New Economic Plan for African Development (NEPAD) and the vision of a proactive role for the African continent in driving its own development, the Global Deal proposals constituted part of the broader South African commitment to an ‘African Renaissance’ in international relations.<sup>17</sup>

As well as the South African and Danish proposals, many non-state actors also endorsed the Global Deal proposals.<sup>18</sup> For example, the Heinrich Böll Foundation’s publication, *The Jo’burg Memo*, authored by 17 leading academics, intellectuals, activists and diplomats and coordinated by Wolfgang Sachs, called for a Global Deal that would represent “a pact between the stronger and the weaker for a common, more secure future.”<sup>19</sup> This Global Deal would involve “structural changes in the architecture of the transnational economy”, and it advocated proposals such as debt relief, fair trade, making WTO rules equal to or subservient to environmental regulations, establishing a legal convention on corporate accountability and creating a World Environment Organisation.<sup>20</sup> It also emphasised the historic legacy of pollution and exploitation owed by the North to the South. *The Jo’burg Memo* concluded that, “in a nutshell, restraint (in resource use and the exercise of power), reparation (from North to South), and rights (for citizens, communities and national societies) are the conceptual coordinates for framing a global deal.”<sup>21</sup>

These proposals never crystallised into an explicit and coherent platform, and they often provoked a great deal of doubt, distrust and outright opposition.<sup>22</sup> It

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid; Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development: Prepcom I Summary*, 22, 3, (Manitoba; International Institute for Sustainable Development, 04/05/2001), p. 7; and P. Vale and S. Maseko, ‘South Africa and the African Renaissance’, *International Affairs*, 74, 2, (1998), pp. 271 – 287.

<sup>18</sup> European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Towards a Global Partnership for Sustainable Development*, (Brussels; European Commission, 2002); European Commission, *The World Summit on Sustainable Development: People, Planet and Prosperity*, (Luxembourg; European Commission Environment Directorate General, 2002); Hamann *et al*, ‘Competing Visions and Conflicting Priorities’, p. 15; IIED, *Equity for a Small Planet: Challenges and Ideas for the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, (London; IIED, 2001), p. 3; South African NGO Caucus, *Towards the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 2002*, (Berlin; Heinrich Böll Foundation, February 2001).

<sup>19</sup> Sachs, *The Jo’burg Memo*, p. 69.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Bigg, ‘The World Summit on Sustainable Development’, pp. 11 – 13.

became clear relatively early that there was little chance of agreeing on a new overarching deal in Johannesburg, not least due to the prevailing international climate of pessimism and insecurity post-9/11, increasing US unilateralism, and a looming global economic downturn.<sup>23</sup> Yet the rationality of government underlying the Global Deal proposals continued to underpin diplomatic efforts to secure the strongest multilateral agreements possible at the WSSD. The campaigns for binding targets, concrete timetables, firm pledges of resources and support and stronger legal regimes were all part of this approach to sustainable development. The following sections therefore describe the fields of visibility, regimes of knowledge, assemblages of techniques and technologies, and forms of identity and subjectivity which constituted this rationality of government.

### **Fields of Visibility**

The Global Deal approach to implementing sustainable development explicitly articulated a global vision which invoked the planetary scope of Brundtland and Rio. It also established poverty as the primary focus of sustainable development, although in broad terms which allowed for social and environmental dimensions to be addressed in terms of poverty eradication. These two aspects constituted the central planks of the fields of visibility established by the Global Deal rationality of government.

The broad global scope was evident in the South African non-paper which asserted that “the global community stands at the brink of one of the most significant events of the early Millennium” – the WSSD – which “could be the most significant global gathering in recent history for the world.”<sup>24</sup> It argued that

if the world continues along this unequal growth path, the combined threats of ill health and disease, conflicts over natural resources, underdevelopment, environmental degradation and economic instability will undermine even the prosperity and stability of the developed world. Poverty is not only a problem of poor nations but also negatively impacts on richer nations. The continued marginalisation of developing countries and the social exclusion of the vast majority of their people constitute a threat to global stability.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Telephone interview with Tom Bigg, IIED, (14/09/2007); Kalhauge *et al*, ‘The Multilateral Process for Sustainable Development’, p. 19; email communication with Saliem Fakir, director of IUCN-SA, (27/10/2006). The WSSD was overshadowed by the first anniversary of 9/11, despite moving the Summit forward by two weeks. JOWSCO, *Annual Report 2001-2002*, (Johannesburg; JOWSCO, 2002), p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> South Africa, *From Rio to Johannesburg*, p. 1; DEAT, *People, Planet, Prosperity*, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> South Africa, *From Rio to Johannesburg*, p. 2.

The EU position paper on the WSSD argued that “sustainable development can be achieved only if it is recognised as a global objective: whatever is undertaken in one country or area will impact on the wider environment.”<sup>26</sup>

The Global Deal proposals represented a holistic and comprehensive view of the nature of sustainable development, one in which the inter-relationships between environmental, social and economic issues required a multilateral, planetary approach. The Danish non-paper, for example, explicitly argued that the “purpose of ‘A Global Deal’ is to ensure a new balance between the global economic, social and environmental development with a view to furthering global sustainable development.”<sup>27</sup> The EU position paper on the WSSD made clear “that environmental concerns cannot be treated as if they were separate from social and economic policies”, and “the legacy of this compartmentalised thinking is a series of grave threats to the viability of our way of life.”<sup>28</sup> For the South African hosts “the need to integrate the three pillars of sustainable development”, and particularly to ensure that poverty eradication was at its heart, was one of the primary high-level reasons for hosting the Summit.<sup>29</sup> They expressed their hope that the Summit would “find solutions to the current crises facing humanity today: poverty, conflict, economic instability, the negative effects of globalisation, the degradation of environmental resources and emerging pandemics such as HIV/AIDS.”<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the *The Jo’burg Memo* adopted a comprehensive and holistic approach to sustainable development, with chapters on water, energy, urban livelihoods, genetic knowledge, trade and finance, biodiversity rights and values, and global governance and institutions.<sup>31</sup>

This broad view of sustainable development was firmly within the Brundtland and Rio traditions. The Global Deal visions however represented an emerging

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<sup>26</sup> European Commission, *The World Summit on Sustainable Development*, p. 4.

<sup>27</sup> Denmark, *Non-paper*.

<sup>28</sup> European Commission, *The World Summit on Sustainable Development*, p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> DEAT, *People, Planet, Prosperity*, p. 13. See also B. Turok, ‘Battle for the WSSD: Valli Moosa, Minister of Environment, Talks to Ben Turok, 20 September 2002’, *New Agenda, South African Journal of Social and Economic Policy*, 8, (2002), p. 15; interview with Chippy Olver, Director General of DEAT and chairman of JOWSCO, (Johannesburg, 05/10/2006).

<sup>30</sup> South Africa, *From Rio to Johannesburg*, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Sachs, *The Jo’burg Memo*. For a similar diversity and breadth see Civil Society Secretariat, *A Sustainable World is Possible: Outcomes of the Global Peoples Forum at the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, (Johannesburg; South African Civil Society Secretariat, undated).

consensus that eradicating poverty was the primary focus of the discourse.<sup>32</sup> It was the subject of the first chapter in the *Plan of Implementation*, which asserted that “eradicating poverty is the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, particularly for developing countries.”<sup>33</sup> As such, discussions of limits to growth, population and environmental catastrophes were relatively absent from the Johannesburg debates and only 23 paragraphs of the *Plan of Implementation* were devoted to “protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development”, out of 170 paragraphs in total.<sup>34</sup> Whereas *Agenda 21* devoted over a third of its paragraphs and over half of its pages to the “conservation and management of resources for development”, the Johannesburg outcomes prioritised poverty and socio-economic development.<sup>35</sup>

This re-framing of the discourse towards traditional development concerns rather than ecological issues was also reflected in the changing titles of the Stockholm-Rio-Johannesburg summits, which progressed from the *Human Environment*; through *Environment and Development*; to *Sustainable Development*.<sup>36</sup> As Adil Najam explains, “the nomenclature of these mega-conferences is not just of semantic importance, it demonstrates a significant evolution in the very content of what constitutes the substance of global environmental governance.”<sup>37</sup> Many environmentalists were frustrated by the apparent marginalisation of ecological concerns at the WSSD, and Shiva angrily alleged that there was an “official directive to the media to remove the term ‘Earth’ from all references to the World Summit in Johannesburg, and only refer to poverty or development.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development: Prepcom I*, 22, 1, (Manitoba; International Institute for Sustainable Development, 01/05/2001), p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> UN, *Plan of Implementation*, #7.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Although a crude measurement of the relative importance of the social, economic and environmental pillars, and despite the fact that the Johannesburg outcomes were intended to supplement rather than replace *Agenda 21*, the different amounts of space devoted to environmental issues in the two documents is stark. *Agenda 21* had 14 out of 40 paragraphs and 193 out of 349 pages devoted to the environmental pillar; whereas the Johannesburg *Plan of Implementation* had only 23 out of 170 paragraphs and 17 out of 61 pages.

<sup>36</sup> Chasek, *Earth Negotiations*, p. 201; Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development: African Preparatory Conference*, 22, 5, (Manitoba; International Institute for Sustainable Development, 04/05/2001), p. 8.

<sup>37</sup> Najam, ‘Developing Countries and Global Environmental Governance’, p. 313.

<sup>38</sup> V. Shiva, ‘World Summit on Sustainable Development or World Summit for Supporting Destruction?’, *African Wildlife*, 56, 3, (2002), p. 19. Pamela Chasek also reported sentiments expressed in Johannesburg that the WSSD signalled “the clear death of ‘the environment’”. Interview with Pamela Chasek, Executive Editor Earth Negotiations Bulletin, (New York, 22/10/2007).

Yet to interpret the WSSD as establishing the dominance of ‘Southern development’ ahead of ‘Northern environment’ priorities is simplistic and misleading. In fact, as Wapner has argued, the WSSD signalled the redundancy of the “idea that the North cares only about the environment while the South worries solely about development.”<sup>39</sup> For Wapner, Johannesburg showed that “much of the South is increasingly concerned with environmental issues”, particularly the two-way link between environmental degradation and poverty; whereas conversely “Northern governments are now increasingly letting these concerns fall by the wayside in favour of, ironically, economic development.”<sup>40</sup> Certainly, much of the pressure for international action on apparently ‘environmental’ issues, such as water, climate change and biodiversity, at the WSSD came from delegates from developing countries, although the EU retained its traditional enthusiasm in these areas. However, rather than seeing a simple reversal of the binary divisions between ‘South/North’ and ‘environment/development’, what the Johannesburg Summit demonstrated was the increasingly doubtful value of these categories in analysing sustainable development politics.

Rather than competing ‘environment’ and ‘development’ agendas, the Global Deal vision at the WSSD brought them together through a focus on poverty and its ramifications on a planetary scale. By framing poverty in broad terms as injustice and inequality, in which economic inequity, social disempowerment and environmental degradation were all implicated, the Global Deal vision allowed green, red and brown articulations of sustainable development all to frame their concerns in terms of poverty eradication and justice. The final texts confirmed this, with sections on energy access, production and consumption patterns, renewable energy, climate change, agriculture, desertification, biodiversity, forests, globalisation, and health, plus many more, all relating back to the primary challenge of eradicating poverty.<sup>41</sup>

The Global Deal proposals therefore established a broad, planetary, inclusive vision of government, structured around the primary goal of poverty eradication. The task of sustainable development was envisaged, as in Brundtland, as the management of global development paths. The South African proposal argued that “the way that the First World nations have advanced – through industry – has been acknowledged

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<sup>39</sup> Wapner, ‘World Summit on Sustainable Development’, p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> UN, *Plan of Implementation*, #9e; 17; 20e; 38; 40b; 41; 44; 45; 47; 53, and many more.

as deeply flawed and fundamentally unsustainable ... we cannot go down the same path.”<sup>42</sup> This global project was most strongly articulated at the Summit in the Johannesburg *Political Declaration*, which was committed to the “interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development – economic development, social development and environmental protection”, and “confirmed that significant progress has been made towards achieving a global consensus and partnership among all the people of our planet.”<sup>43</sup>

### **Regimes of knowledge**

Within this global and holistic field of visibility, certain forms of knowledge were established and rendered authoritative in identifying unsustainable development, re-orientating economic and social practices, and monitoring their success. The natural and economic sciences were invoked as in the Brundtland Report and *Agenda 21*, and a more political and ethical understanding of the relationship between science, public values and policy-making was stressed.

Panels at the WSSD reported that “new research was needed on natural, social and economic systems and their interactions, as the status of observational data is worse than it was ten years ago”; and representatives of the scientific and technological community reiterated the “ever-increasing need for more accurate scientific data.”<sup>44</sup> The *Plan of Implementation* demanded more sophisticated modelling and analysis techniques, “improved use of climate and weather information and forecasts”, “early warning systems”, “national monitoring networks”, “resource databases” and “remote-sensing and satellite technologies”; in sum to “build greater capacity in science and technology for sustainable development.”<sup>45</sup> Surveillance technologies were urged, such as “the development and wider use of earth observation technologies, including satellite remote sensing, global mapping and geographic information systems, to collect quality data on environmental impacts, land use and

<sup>42</sup> DEAT, *People, Planet, Prosperity*, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> UN, *The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development*, #5 and 10.

<sup>44</sup> Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development*, 22, 44, (Manitoba; International Institute for Sustainable Development, 28/08/2002), p. 1; and UN, *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, p. 118. See also R. E. Green, A. Balmford, P. R. Crane, G. M. Mace, J. D. Reynolds, and R. K. Turner, ‘A Framework for Improved Monitoring of Biodiversity: Responses to the World Summit on Sustainable Development’, *Conservation Biology*, 19, 1, (2005), pp. 56 – 65.

<sup>45</sup> UN, *Plan of Implementation*, #7; 28; 36; 37; 38; 108; 110; 129; 132, 133.

land-use changes.”<sup>46</sup> The concept of ‘ecological foot-printing’, which involves calculating the environmental impact of particular societies, nations or events, was discussed but due to US opposition did not make it into the final text.<sup>47</sup>

As well as ‘more science’ the Global Deal proposals also called for new and additional financial resources for development.<sup>48</sup> The *Plan of Implementation* reflected this, stressing that sustainable development would “require significant increases in the flow of financial resources as elaborated in the Monterrey Consensus, including through new and additional financial resources, in particular to developing countries.”<sup>49</sup> Yet these calls for ‘more science and more resources’ were balanced by the acknowledgement that they were not the primary obstacles to achieving sustainable development. For advocates of a Global Deal the main challenge was political. As such greater public access to information and policy-making was urged, and the Danish non-paper emphasised the importance of previous agreements such as Rio’s Principle 10 (on public access to information and participation in decision-making) and the 2001 Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters.<sup>50</sup> Public participation, lay knowledge and the need for science to be informed by civic values were stressed in *The Jo’burg Memo*.<sup>51</sup> The most sophisticated articulation of these concerns was by Professor Steve Rayner of the UK Economic and Social Research Council’s ‘Science in Society Programme’, who suggested that

scientists could administer some much needed shock therapy to the sustainable development debate by declaring unequivocally that further research is not a prerequisite for sound policy action, that science has already established a solid justification for society to act, and that politicians can no longer shelter behind the myth of the perfectibility of scientific knowledge. At this point in history the role of scientists as citizens may be more important than their role as technical experts.<sup>52</sup>

In calling for scientists to focus on their role as citizens rather than technical experts, Rayner drew attention to the political and ethical dimensions of sustainable development, rather than viewing it as a primarily scientific or technical challenge.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, #132.

<sup>47</sup> Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development: UNECE Regional Ministerial Meeting*, p. 10.

<sup>48</sup> South Africa, *From Rio to Johannesburg*, p. 3; European Commission, *The World Summit on Sustainable Development*, p. 7.

<sup>49</sup> UN, *Plan of Implementation*, #81.

<sup>50</sup> Denmark, *Non-paper*; and Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, pp. 111 – 112.

<sup>51</sup> Sachs, *The Jo’burg Memo*, pp. 44 and 62.

<sup>52</sup> S. Rayner, ‘We Know Enough’, *The Guardian* (UK), 02/09/2002.



This was an important feature of the Global Deal approach and reflects a more subtle and nuanced understanding of the relationship between power and knowledge than many other articulations of sustainable development.<sup>53</sup> Accordingly the *Plan of Implementation* acknowledged, if only in passing, “the importance of ethics for sustainable development.”<sup>54</sup>

Greater scientific and economic knowledge, measurement, assessment and modelling, mobilised in the pursuit of the political goal of equitable sustainable development, were accordingly crucial elements of the Global Deal approach. The tendency of the Global Deal proposals to invoke scientific and technical knowledge has much in common with the techniques of disciplinary government familiar from Brundtland and *Agenda 21*, however they also explicitly drew attention to the importance of balancing scientific knowledge with public participation, and hence to the inherently contextual and political nature of sustainable development.

### **Techniques and technologies**

The principal mechanisms demanded by the Global Deal proposals were the creation of binding multilateral regimes and regulations, and negotiated targets and timeframes. There were calls for new legal conventions, such as on corporate accountability; targets on renewable energy, sanitation and biodiversity; and regulations, such as on health care, chemicals and the relationship between trade and environmental agreements.

The South African non-paper argued that implementing sustainable development would require “concrete plans of action, delivery mechanisms, resource plans, targets and timeframes within an overarching and time bound ‘Johannesburg Programme of Action’.”<sup>55</sup> The Danish non-paper suggested that the Global Deal should be based around the Millennium Development Goal targets, “international standards for environment and labour”, increased development assistance (aiming for the 0.7 per cent of GDP target), and the “ratification and implementation of existing multilateral environmental agreements within set time limits as well as strengthening and activating the financial mechanisms of these agreements.”<sup>56</sup> Chasek and Sherman reported that “the Group of 77 and China was active in seeking clear targets and time

<sup>53</sup> Corell and Sundqvist, ‘Knowledge Processes in Decision-Making on Sustainability’.

<sup>54</sup> UN, *Plan of Implementation*, #6.

<sup>55</sup> South Africa, *From Rio to Johannesburg*, p. 5. See also DEAT, *People, Planet, Prosperity*, p. 13.

<sup>56</sup> Denmark, *Non-paper*.

frames for implementation on most issues.”<sup>57</sup> The EU sought targets on sanitation, renewable energy, biodiversity and sustainable consumption and production.<sup>58</sup> Most large environmental NGOs at the WSSD also pressed for stronger texts and timeframes, for example Claude Martin of the WWF argued that “it is essential that the WSSD does not simply end up with declarations and voluntary pledges, but instead concrete commitments with targets and time-frames.”<sup>59</sup>

The biggest victory for the Global Deal approach was the agreement of a new binding multilateral target on sanitation. Whilst there was a Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on halving the number of people without access to safe water by 2015, there was no equivalent target on sanitation. Thanks to a concerted campaign by NGOs and water caucuses, as well as EU and G77 delegations, the *Plan of Implementation* set the target of halving the number of people without access to clean sanitation by 2015, despite considerable American opposition.<sup>60</sup> However, there were rumours that the US and Japan had only agreed to the target on sanitation in exchange for other targets being dropped, such as on renewable energy.<sup>61</sup>

Indeed, there were few other new and binding international targets in the final text. Whilst paragraphs on the safe management of chemicals by 2020 and achieving sustainable fisheries by 2015 were welcomed, many other targets were regarded as vague, non-binding, or as repetitions of previous agreements.<sup>62</sup> Reviewing the contribution of the WSSD to international law, Marc Pallemmaerts concluded that it contained few concrete legal additions or clarifications to existing laws, and moreover “even references to law in general as an instrument of social governance are rather scarce throughout the text.”<sup>63</sup> Targets on renewable energy proposed by the EU and Brazil were opposed not only by the Americans, but also by the G77 and China, and

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<sup>57</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 97.

<sup>58</sup> European Commission, *The World Summit on Sustainable Development*, pp. 11 – 14.

<sup>59</sup> WWF, *Strengthened NEPAD offers new hope for WSSD success*, (05/07/2002).

<sup>60</sup> UN, *Plan of Implementation*, #8.

<sup>61</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 109; S. Lightfoot, ‘A Good International Citizen? Australia at the World Summit on Sustainable Development’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 60, 3, (2006), p. 463; Munnik and Wilson, *The World Comes to One Country*, p. 69. This rumour was emphatically denied by others, including Alf Wills and Chippy Olver.

<sup>62</sup> UN, *Plan of Implementation*, #23 and 31a; Von Frantzius, ‘World Summit on Sustainable Development Johannesburg 2002’.

<sup>63</sup> M. Pallemmaerts, ‘International Law and Sustainable Development: Any Progress in Johannesburg?’, *RECIEL*, 12, 1 (2003), p. 3.

the final text stressed increasing access to energy for the poor rather than renewable energy or greater efficiency.<sup>64</sup>

In terms of implementing these agreements, the *Political Declaration* somewhat plaintively urged “developed countries that have not done so to make concrete efforts [to] reach the internationally agreed levels of official development assistance.”<sup>65</sup> However it was broadly recognised that levels of development aid had failed dismally to reach the target of 0.7 per cent of GDP, and several states made it clear “it was unrealistic to expect any rapid or dramatic increases.”<sup>66</sup> New sources of finance, such as the Type II partnerships with the private sector, were therefore desperately needed. Yet advocates of a Global Deal were concerned about the possible “privatisation of development”, and smaller states were worried they could be marginalised in a competitive market for corporate investment.<sup>67</sup> NGOs were concerned that partnerships would “offer governments an ‘escape hatch’ – a way of evading meaningful inter-governmentally agreed commitments.”<sup>68</sup> Thus the Global Deal perspective on partnerships emphasised the need for fixed structures, coordination and oversight. The South African non-paper, for example, recognised the role partnerships must play in implementation, but clarified that “within each priority area, stakeholder groups will be called on to make concrete commitments to their role and responsibility in meeting the targets agreed.”<sup>69</sup> This desire to regulate and govern corporate participation more closely was articulated most forcefully through campaigns for a convention on corporate accountability.

A coalition of NGOs, supported by many developing states, called for a legally binding UN convention regulating the participation of the private sector in sustainable development.<sup>70</sup> Opposition emerged during PrepCom II when the US,

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<sup>64</sup> This opposition was led by OPEC, but many developing countries believed a target on renewable energy would be used as trade protectionism for advanced European energy technologies. Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development*, 22, 46, (Manitoba; International Institute for Sustainable Development, 30/08/2002), p. 3; UN, *Plan of Implementation*, #9.

<sup>65</sup> UN, *The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development*, #22.

<sup>66</sup> Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development: Brainstorming Session*, p. 5.

<sup>67</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 97; interview with Diane Quarless, Vice Chair and Rapporteur on the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee for the WSSD, and co-Chair of Partnership Initiatives, (New York, 17/10/2007).

<sup>68</sup> Eco-Equity, *Critical Considerations about Type 2 partnerships*, (20/08/2002).

<sup>69</sup> South Africa, *From Rio to Johannesburg*, p. 5.

<sup>70</sup> This campaign was spearheaded by Friends of the Earth International. See Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 103; ‘Civil Society Declaration’, in Civil Society Secretariat, *A Sustainable World is Possible*, p. 12; and Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development: Prepcom II Summary*, p. 3.

South Korea, Turkey and Canada, among others, sought to remove even minimal references to voluntary corporate responsibility from the Chairperson's text. This was blocked by the G77 and China, who proposed new text on the responsibilities of trans-national corporations.<sup>71</sup> The issue arose again in Bali where a UN framework on corporate accountability was discussed, but remained in brackets after the EU and the US argued that this was a matter for national governments, or at least should be downgraded to a framework on corporate responsibility.<sup>72</sup> Thus the debate became framed in terms of those favouring voluntary corporate responsibility and those who demanded stricter corporate accountability.

‘Corporate responsibility’ was claimed by the sizeable business lobby at the Summit as being the main pathway by which business would voluntarily, and by means of partnerships, contribute to implementing sustainable development. ... ‘Corporate accountability’, in contrast, was the rallying cry of most non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community groups assembled in Johannesburg, who saw (big) business as the main constraint to sustainable development and who demanded strict regulation of corporate behaviour by national governments as well as an international corporate accountability convention.<sup>73</sup>

The official Summit outcomes included the language of both corporate responsibility and accountability, yet the balance was unambiguously tilted towards the former. The *Political Declaration* stated that “there is a need for private sector corporations to enforce corporate accountability, which should take place within a transparent and stable regulatory environment”, a formulation which relied on corporations exercising responsible self-government.<sup>74</sup> The *Plan of Implementation* compromised by asserting the need to “enhance corporate environmental and social responsibility and accountability.”<sup>75</sup> This was to be achieved through encouraging “industry to improve social and environmental performance through voluntary initiatives, including environmental management systems, codes of conduct, certification and public reporting on environmental and social issues.”<sup>76</sup> The most contentious debates were over whether paragraph 49 laid the basis for a future inter-

<sup>71</sup> Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development: Prepcom II Summary*, p. 6.

<sup>72</sup> Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development: Prepcom IV Summary*, 22, 41, (Manitoba; International Institute for Sustainable Development, 10/06/2002), p. 3.

<sup>73</sup> R. Hamann, N. Acutt and P. Kapelus, ‘Responsibility versus Accountability? Interpreting the World Summit on Sustainable Development for a Synthesis model of Corporate Citizenship’, *Journal of Corporate Citizenship*, 9, (2003), p. 21.

<sup>74</sup> UN, *The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development*, #29.

<sup>75</sup> UN, *Plan of Implementation*, #18.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, #18a.

governmental regime on corporate accountability, and dramatic exchanges continued until the very close of the Summit.<sup>77</sup> The final position was ambiguous, and optimistic commentators concluded that an opening had been created which might “actually result in future intergovernmental processes that would enable civil society to push for the creation of an international regulatory framework for corporations.”<sup>78</sup> The texts themselves however were firmly behind a conception of corporate responsibility as voluntary and self-governing, rather than a more structured regulatory relationship. This was a reflection of the broader failure of the Global Deal vision to achieve many of the new binding regimes, conventions, targets or timeframes desired in Johannesburg.

### **Production of subjectivities**

The Global Deal proposals tended to envision the relationship between governed and governors in relatively state-centric, hierarchical terms. The deal they hoped to strike was one within the international community of states, between the countries of the North and South. States were assumed to be “at the coalface” of delivering the Summit’s outcomes.<sup>79</sup> Different articulations of the Global Deal stressed different ways in which the community of states could be coordinated ‘from above’, or pressurised ‘from below’, but all conceived the principal actors in sustainable development as sovereign states. Even civil society groups, so enthusiastic in their assertion of their own right to participate in Rio in 1992, were very clear in Johannesburg that states could not use partnerships to evade their primary responsibilities. The Eco-Equity NGO network issued a statement urging that, fundamentally, “the responsibility for agreeing on world-wide social and environmental rules must remain with governments”, and that “the primary Summit mandate is for governments to agree to action-oriented, time-bound measures.”<sup>80</sup>

However, many of the Global Deal proposals recognised that the existing state system was relatively uncoordinated. As one pre-Summit discussion paper put it, “the international environmental regime appears weak and fragmented and lacks adequate

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<sup>77</sup> Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development*, 22, 50, (Manitoba; International Institute for Sustainable Development, 04/09/2002), p. 3.

<sup>78</sup> La Viña *et al*, ‘The Outcomes of Johannesburg’, p. 62.

<sup>79</sup> South Africa, *From Rio to Johannesburg*, p. 4. See also Denmark, *Non-paper*.

<sup>80</sup> Eco-Equity, *Critical Considerations about Type 2 partnerships*. See also ‘Civil Society Declaration’, in Civil Society Secretariat, *A Sustainable World is Possible*, p. 10; and Sachs, *The Jo’burg Memo*, p. 10.

expertise, resources, authority, and legitimacy.”<sup>81</sup> The South Africans suggested “a single centralised political council” within the UN system which would “co-ordinate monitoring of progress” on sustainable development.<sup>82</sup> Accordingly the *Political Declaration* asserted that “we need more effective, democratic and accountable international and multilateral institutions”, and supported “the leadership role of the United Nations as the most universal and representative organisation in the world, which is best placed to promote sustainable development.”<sup>83</sup> Other Global Deal proposals echoed pre-existing campaigns for the creation of a new international organisation which could coordinate sustainable development and counter the influence of the World Trade Organisation.<sup>84</sup> *The Jo’burg Memo*, for example, supported “upgrading UNEP into a World Environment Organisation”, as well as proposing the creation of an International Renewable Energy Agency, along the lines of the International Atomic Energy Agency.<sup>85</sup>

The Global Deal approach therefore represented an interventionist, structured rationality of government which sought to discipline and police global politics in the interests of sustainable development. It aimed to re-invigorate the eco-governmental projects of Brundtland and Rio, relying on a community of states governing through multilateral conventions, regulations and scientific expertise. Just as Foucault identified the emergence of bio-politics in the nineteenth century, when “methods of power and knowledge assumed responsibility for the life processes and undertook to control and modify them”, so the Global Deal proposals sought to manage and regulate the safety and security of the global population for sustainable development.<sup>86</sup> As such it embodied a rationality of government that was fundamentally more global, more holistic, more interventionist and more state-centric than that of the partnerships approach. It was also more explicitly political.

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<sup>81</sup> B. Gemmill, M. Ivanova, and C. Y. Ling, *Designing a New Architecture for Global Environmental Governance*, WSSD Issue Paper, (London; IIED, 2001-2), p. 1.

<sup>82</sup> DEAT, *People, Planet, Prosperity*, p. 12; South Africa, *From Rio to Johannesburg*, p. 4.

<sup>83</sup> UN, *The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development*, #31 and 32.

<sup>84</sup> Haas, ‘UN Conferences and Constructivist Governance of the Environment’, p. 88; P. M. Haas, ‘Addressing the Global Governance Deficit’, *Global Environmental Politics*, 4, 4, (2004), p. 7.

<sup>85</sup> Sachs, *The Jo’burg Memo*, p. 66.

<sup>86</sup> Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, p. 142.

### *The 'jazzier dance' of voluntary partnerships*

It was the similarity of the Global Deal approach to the eco-governmentality of Brundtland and Rio that led many to view it with jaded scepticism in Johannesburg. After all, progress on sustainable development since 1992 had hardly been inspiring. Johannesburg's *Political Declaration* noted that

The global environment continues to suffer. Loss of biodiversity continues, fish stocks continue to be depleted, desertification claims more and more fertile land, the adverse effects of climate change are already evident, natural disasters are more frequent and more devastating, and developing countries more vulnerable, and air, water and marine pollution continue to rob millions of a decent life.<sup>87</sup>

"It is by now evident", one commentator proclaimed, "that the traditional structures of international relations involving sovereign states will not suffice to attain sustainable development."<sup>88</sup> For many delegates in Johannesburg new ways of thinking about and implementing development, new partners, and new flexible modes of governing were needed. The interventionist model of regulations, targets and timeframes was thus placed to one side, and new flexible and voluntary partnerships which could harness the vitality and creativity of private actors and civil society came to the fore.<sup>89</sup>

The UN initially proposed including Type II agreements in the WSSD outcomes. They represented a new source of funds, offered a way to rescue a floundering Summit, and potentially opened up a new role for the UN as a coordinating agency of partnerships for development.<sup>90</sup> Leading UN figures saw the partnerships as a way to tap the financial, technological, scientific and managerial resources of the private sector, for example through sending corporate technicians to developing countries: "we were thinking of a corporation deploying their scientists to

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<sup>87</sup> UN, *The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development*, #13.

<sup>88</sup> K. Von Moltke, 'Governments and International Civil Society in Sustainable Development: A Framework', *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics*, 2, (2002), p. 343.

<sup>89</sup> Martens, *Multistakeholder Partnerships*.

<sup>90</sup> L. B. Andonova and M. A. Levy, 'Franchising Global Governance: Making Sense of the Johannesburg Type II Partnerships', in O. S. Stokke and O. B. Thommessen (eds.), *Yearbook of International Cooperation on Environment and Development 2003/2004*, (London; Earthscan, 2003), p. 20; B. Bull, M. Bøås, and D. McNeill, 'Private Sector Influence in the Multilateral System: A Changing Structure of World Governance?', *Global Governance*, 10, (2004), pp. 484 – 485; and J.-P. Thérien and V. Pouliot, 'The Global Compact: Shifting the Politics of International Development', *Global Governance*, 12, (2006), p. 63.

go and work in one of these countries.”<sup>91</sup> The Type II proposals reflected broader trends towards greater co-operation between the UN and the private sector which had been developing throughout the 1990s and culminated in the launch of the Global Compact in July 2000.<sup>92</sup> In line with these trends, Kofi Annan declared prior to the WSSD that whilst “governments will agree on a common plan of action ... the most creative agents of change may well be partnerships – among governments, private businesses, non-profit organisations, scholars and concerned citizens.”<sup>93</sup>

The UN’s view was that Type II outcomes were a complement to, rather than a replacement of, the Type I multilaterally negotiated texts. The brief UN guidelines on the partnerships stated that they “should have a multi-stakeholder approach” and include “governments, regional groups, local authorities, non-governmental actors, international institutions and private sector partners.”<sup>94</sup> They should be “specific commitments” to reinforce the implementation of the WSSD outcomes, Millennium Development Goals and *Agenda 21*; they were to be “voluntary” and “self-organising”; they were not to substitute for government agreements or implementation; their activities should be transparent and accountable (although how such accountability would be ensured was not mentioned); they must “have clear objectives and set specific measurable targets and timeframes for their achievement”; they must be “new” and demonstrate “added value”; have an international impact; and report to the CSD which would act as a “focal point”.<sup>95</sup>

However, as negotiations progressed, it became clear that some of the strongest supporters of partnerships saw them as alternatives rather than complements to multilateral targets and timeframes.<sup>96</sup> Jonathan Margolis, the head of the US delegation to PrepCom II, clarified the American position by stating that “there isn’t going to be a single Global Deal” at the WSSD, and rather than looking for “grand solutions” he declared that they were more interested in “solutions that actually lead

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<sup>91</sup> Interview with Diane Quarless, Vice Chair and Rapporteur on the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee for the WSSD, and co-Chair of Partnership Initiatives, (New York, 17/10/2007).

<sup>92</sup> Abrahamsen, ‘The Power of Partnerships in Global Governance’; Bull *et al*, ‘Private Sector Influence in the Multilateral System’, p. 485; Gould, ‘Poverty, Politics and States of Partnership’; Martens, *Multistakeholder Partnerships*; Thérien and Pouliot, ‘The Global Compact’.

<sup>93</sup> Annan, ‘Towards a Sustainable Future’, p. 14.

<sup>94</sup> UN, *Guiding Principles for Partnerships*.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development: Brainstorming Session*, p. 5; Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development: Prepcom IV Summary*, p. 14; Lightfoot, ‘A Good International Citizen?’, p. 464; and Turok, ‘Battle for the WSSD’, pp. 17 – 18.



to concrete developments on the ground.”<sup>97</sup> References to ‘concrete developments’ and ‘on-the-ground’ outcomes were euphemisms for the voluntary Type II partnerships.

Critical commentators interpreted the US enthusiasm for partnerships as a way of blocking more binding agreements, and the absence of President Bush only seemed to confirm the impression that the Americans were not taking sustainable development seriously.<sup>98</sup> Whilst anti-environmentalist strains within certain American administrations are undeniable, writing-off US participation in the WSSD as cynical and disruptive risks underestimating their commitment and enthusiasm to a particular form of development. This is a form of development increasingly conducted through new actors and mechanisms, and according to USAID in 2006 85 per cent of resource flows from the US to the developing world came from the private sector.<sup>99</sup> Rather than dismiss these trends as anti-environmental, greenwash or corporate colonialism, such techniques are consistent with the increasing dominance of modes of advanced liberal government.

### Fields of Visibility

Rather than the planetary vision of the Global Deal, the partnership approach focussed on showcasing exemplary projects that contributed to specific aspects of the sustainable development agenda. Thus attention was directed towards successful and encouraging partnerships, including the provision of solar water heaters to a university in Northern Gauteng, the generation of thermal energy from biogas in a rural community in Maphephetheni, and the installation of energy saving technologies at Baragwanath Hospital.<sup>100</sup> These projects – and many others outside South Africa – “were marketed at the WSSD as projects demonstrating environmental best practice.”<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Quoted in Bigg ‘The World Summit on Sustainable Development’, p. 11.

<sup>98</sup> One of the South African negotiators at the WSSD angrily described the US position as “f\*\*k the UN and f\*\*k these agreements”, claiming they had only come to Johannesburg to play “a wrecking role”. Interview with Chippy Olver, Director General of DEAT and chairman of JOWSCO, (Johannesburg, 05/10/2006).

<sup>99</sup> D. Runde, ‘How to Make Development Partnerships Work’, *OECD Observer*, 255, (May 2006), p. 36.

<sup>100</sup> Future Forests, *Greening the WSSD*, pp. 6 – 7.

<sup>101</sup> Z. Patel, ‘Understanding Environmental Change in South African Cities: a landscape approach’, *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, 57, (2005), p. 31.

As individual and bilaterally-agreed initiatives, the scope of the Type II partnerships accredited in Johannesburg did not cover the entire spectrum of sustainable development issues but rather clusters in certain areas. UN figures show that the most populated individual issue-areas include water, education and energy.<sup>102</sup> Consistently under-represented thematic areas have included biotechnology, chemicals, drought, industrial development, mining, and mountains.<sup>103</sup> The relative scarcity of UN-accredited partnerships in these areas seems to reflect certain industries' reluctance to participate in sustainable development initiatives. More broadly, Andonova and Levy drew attention to the fact that less than half of the CSD-accredited partnerships in 2003 were

designed to address a substantive environmental management problem such as food security, biodiversity, climate change, desertification, disaster preparedness, energy, forests, fresh water, minerals and mining, coastal management, and mountain development.<sup>104</sup>

In contrast, a large proportion of partnerships were focussed on 'means of implementation', defined as "capacity building, education, science, and information for decision making, as well as the development of financial and trade mechanisms for sustainable development."<sup>105</sup> This suggests that partnerships occur where resources are more readily available, and address issues where success is more easily measurable (such as provision of information technology) rather than complex socio-environmental issues (such as desertification or land degradation). As such Andonova and Levy conclude that partnerships "are supply driven rather than demand driven", and that "the process is heading for a future that will replicate as opposed to changing the world order."<sup>106</sup>

As well as approaching sustainable development on a project-by-project basis with no overall coordination or management, the partnership approach also fenced off certain issues as being outside the scope of the WSSD. For example, trade was regarded as a parallel issue that was being negotiated through the Doha process;

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<sup>102</sup> CSD partnerships database, <http://webapps01.un.org/dsd/partnerships/public/welcome.do>

<sup>103</sup> Ibid; UN, *Partnerships for Sustainable Development – Update: Background Paper Number 1*, presented at the Commission on Sustainable Development, Thirteenth Session, 11-22/04/2005, (New York; DESA, 2005); and UN *Report of the Secretary-General to the 16<sup>th</sup> Session of the CSD, Thematic cluster for the implementation cycle 2008-2009: Partnerships for Sustainable Development*, 05-16/05/2008, (New York; UN, 2008), p. 6.

<sup>104</sup> Andonova and Levy, 'Franchising Global Governance', p. 25.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, pp. 19 and 29.

climate change was in the hands of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol; terrorism and ‘rogue states’ such as Iraq were matters for the UN Security Council (or, for the Americans, the White House); the world economy was a matter for central banks and the World Economic Forum; and healthcare rights were to be decided by individual states according to their private religious and social traditions.<sup>107</sup> Despite the convening of a UN ‘Financing for Development’ conference in Monterrey in March 2002, commentators noticed with surprise that there was “only half-hearted interaction” between it and the WSSD.<sup>108</sup> Whereas all of these fields were central to the Global Deal vision of sustainable development, they were largely removed from view in the partnership approach.

As such, by focussing on specific and measurable projects the partnership approach compartmentalised the broader sustainable development agenda. One member of the US delegation suggested that sustainable development “might be a great vision but an untenable policy orientation”, and that paring back its scope to focus on purely ‘environmental’ issues might be worthwhile.<sup>109</sup> This compartmentalisation was demonstrated during the debates on the Rio principle of ‘common but differentiated responsibilities’ in Johannesburg. Principle seven of the Rio Declaration stated that

States shall cooperate in a spirit of global partnership to conserve, protect and restore the health and integrity of the Earth’s ecosystem. In view of the different contributions to global environmental degradation, States have common but differentiated responsibilities. The developed countries acknowledge the responsibility that they bear in the international pursuit of sustainable development in view of the pressures their societies place on the global environment and of the technologies and financial resources they command.<sup>110</sup>

In Johannesburg, attempts by G77 delegates to include specific references to this principle in the text, particularly sections on financing, trade and technology transfers to developing countries, provoked huge resistance from many delegations including from the EU as well as JUSCANZ. These objections centred on the argument that the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities “applied only to environmental concerns and should not be extrapolated to cover wider issues of sustainable

<sup>107</sup> Martens, *Multistakeholder Partnerships*.

<sup>108</sup> A. Najam, ‘Financing Sustainable Development: Is there life after Joburg?’, in Bigg, *Survival For a Small Planet*, p. 59.

<sup>109</sup> Quoted in Wapner, ‘World Summit on Sustainable Development’, p. 9.

<sup>110</sup> UN, *Rio Declaration on the Environment and Development*, #7.

development.”<sup>111</sup> This seemed in line with the specific wording of the principle (especially the first two sentences which only mention environmental degradation), but from the perspective of the more holistic Global Deal vision such an emasculation of the principle seemed to go against the whole spirit of sustainable development as integrating environmental, social and economic issues.<sup>112</sup> The final text in Johannesburg was pared of references to the principle in the sections on finance, and the final statement by the US reiterated their opposition to extending it to non-environmental issues.<sup>113</sup> This was consistent with a broader rationality of government that refused to see sustainable development as an overarching policy prescription for global governance, and preferred to isolate and compartmentalise issues of pollution, economic development, free trade, good governance and so on, dealing with each through specific instruments and partnerships.

### **Regimes of knowledge**

The partnership approach also tended to produce narrower, technical, instrumental conceptions of science, technology, economic development and poverty. Whilst similar regimes of knowledge were deployed as in the Global Deal approach, the partnership approach demonstrated little recognition of the social, political and ethical context in which these forms of knowledge were grounded. This can be seen in the attitudes to poverty which prevailed during negotiations. Rather than the structural and relational view of poverty envisioned in the Global Deal, poverty was instead increasingly framed in terms of a lack of resources. During Prepcom III it was observed that the text was “leaning toward a framework for sustainable development in developing countries, rather than a global programme of action. As one delegate pointed out, all the developed countries are being asked to do is ‘pull out their checkbooks’ [sic].”<sup>114</sup> As Blowfield and Frynas explain, within the partnership approach

poverty is presented as a regrettable fact rather than a consequence of any causal conditions and events. The advantage of this is that it allows poverty to be presented to business as something undesirable and soluble on a par with, for instance, a

<sup>111</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 104.

<sup>112</sup> Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development*, 22, 47, (Manitoba; International Institute for Sustainable Development, 31/08/2002), p. 3.

<sup>113</sup> ‘Closing Plenary’, in UN, *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, #20.

<sup>114</sup> Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development: Prepcom III Summary*, 22, 29, (Manitoba; International Institute for Sustainable Development, 08/04/2002), p. 11.

malfunctioning valve or a quality control problem. However, it does nothing to encourage examination of the complexity of multilayered, structurally rooted problems or of the role of business within them.<sup>115</sup>

This narrow and de-contextualised construction was especially prominent in the sections of the text on Africa, which portrayed an economical and depoliticised conception of sustainable development in which there was little recognition of the historical and structural causes of poverty or underdevelopment. The *Plan of Implementation* stated that

Africa's efforts to achieve sustainable development have been hindered by conflicts, insufficient investment, limited market access opportunities and supply side constraints, unsustainable debt burdens, historically declining levels of official development assistance and the impact of HIV/AIDS.<sup>116</sup>

This is a rather one-sided picture of African underdevelopment, one in which 'lack of investment' is more significant than colonial and neo-imperial exploitation, and 'limited market access' is highlighted without recognising the vulnerability of African markets to predatory transnational finance. The text admitted with staggering understatement that "most countries on the continent have not benefited fully from the opportunities of globalisation."<sup>117</sup> On the contrary, countless studies have shown how the enforced global spread of trade liberalisation, structural adjustment and reduced state capacity has contributed to African impoverishment.<sup>118</sup> A recent survey of bilateral agreements between the North and the South by Oxfam International argues that they threaten "to strip developing countries of the capacity to effectively govern their economies and protect their poorest people", and could "systematically dismantle national policies designed to promote development."<sup>119</sup> In West Africa, for example, the imposition of tariff liberalisation on agricultural crops could produce import surges in key crops such as potatoes, poultry, beef and onions, threatening vulnerable domestic producers with collapse.<sup>120</sup> Through such measures, which are

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<sup>115</sup> M. Blowfield and J. G. Frynas, 'Setting New Agendas: Critical Perspectives on Corporate Social Responsibility in the Developing World', *International Affairs*, 81, 3, (2005), pp. 510 – 511.

<sup>116</sup> UN, *Plan of Implementation*, #62.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, #62.

<sup>118</sup> For example see M. Chossudovsky, *The Globalisation of Poverty: Impacts of IMF and World Bank Reforms*, (London; Zed Books, 1997); and D. Simon, 'Debt, Democracy and Development: Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1990s', in D. Simon, W. Van Spengen, C. Dixon and A. Närman (eds.), *Structurally Adjusted Africa: Poverty, Debt and Basic Needs*, (London; Pluto Press, 1995), pp. 17 – 44.

<sup>119</sup> Oxfam International, *Signing Away the Future: How Trade and Investment Agreements between Rich and Poor Countries Undermine Development*, (Oxford; Oxfam International, 2007), p. 2.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, p. 31.

encouraged in the Johannesburg outcomes, poverty is conceptualised as stemming from a lack of competition and free access to global markets, rather than a historical product of international economic and political power relations.

The narrow and instrumental outlook of the partnership approach was also reflected in a view of science and technology that rested on a belief in neutral, objective, universal knowledge. This was most clearly seen in the WSSD debates over the 1992 Rio Declaration's precautionary principle. Principle 15 stated that "where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation."<sup>121</sup> Since Rio the concept of precaution has been codified in a number of international and national environmental legal regimes, and the WTO Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, agreed in Marrakesh in 1994, explicitly refers to the precautionary principle in regard to human health.<sup>122</sup>

The negotiations at the WSSD therefore centred on whether or not to recognise the evolution of the concept since Rio, and specifically its extension beyond strictly 'environmental' issues. Supporters of the principle argued that health was an important sustainable development issue, and that precaution should thus be cited in these parts of the text. In response, a number of countries led by the US sought to restrict the scope and applicability of the principle specifically to environmental questions, arguing that this was the intention of the Rio text. Just as with regard to the negotiations on 'common but differentiated responsibilities', the stance of the US was underpinned by a desire to compartmentalise and divide environmental issues from socio-economic issues. Eventually references to precaution in the section on health were removed, as well from sections on trade where delegates feared it might be used to establish trade barriers on certain products in the absence of scientific certainty.<sup>123</sup>

As well as limiting references to precaution to paragraphs on chemicals and scientific means of implementation, delegates from the US and their allies managed to ensure references were to the "precautionary approach", rather than the "precautionary principle."<sup>124</sup> This was part of a broader strategy to downplay the legal implications of precaution on behalf of a position which "consistently argued for

<sup>121</sup> UN, *Rio Declaration on the Environment and Development*, #15.

<sup>122</sup> Perez, 'The World Summit on Sustainable Development', p. 17.

<sup>123</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 112.

<sup>124</sup> UN, *Plan of Implementation*, #23 and 109f. See Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development: UNECE Regional Ministerial Meeting*, p. 9; and Lightfoot, 'A Good International Citizen?', pp. 462 – 463.

scientific certainty as one of the principal goals of sustainable development policy.”<sup>125</sup> Therefore, whilst Principle 15 implicitly recognises that scientific knowledge will never be complete and that political and ethical judgements must determine scientific contributions, within the partnership approach the prevailing attitude was that more complete scientific knowledge was a prerequisite for political action.<sup>126</sup>

Such a perspective relied upon scientific data being translated into forms directly amenable to political and economic decision-making. From the perspective of policymakers, one of the most useful ways in which scientific knowledge can be communicated is through the language of quantifiable risk. Thus the partnership approach relied upon the calculation of probabilities – species extinction projections, human infection likelihoods, the chance of natural disasters, crime statistics, resource use estimates and so on – and cost-benefit analysis to determine where partnerships could be most effective and efficient. The *Plan of Implementation* called for “transparent science-based risk assessment procedures and science-based risk management procedures” for the sound management of chemicals and hazardous waste.<sup>127</sup> A later section asserted that “an integrated, multi-hazard, inclusive approach to address vulnerability, risk assessment and disaster management, including prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery, is an essential element of a safer world in the twenty-first century.”<sup>128</sup> This rationality makes use of tools to stimulate responsible corporate and governmental action including life cycle assessment, environmental risk assessment, environmental input-output analysis, life cycle costing, cost-benefit analysis, and cost-effectiveness analysis.<sup>129</sup>

Through the calculation of risks and the cost-effectiveness of solutions, sustainable development was orientated toward specific, measurable and efficient partnerships, in particular those which offered technological solutions. The *Political Declaration* resolved that states should

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<sup>125</sup> Bigg, ‘The World Summit on Sustainable Development’, p. 8.

<sup>126</sup> Politicians’ desire for unambiguous, consensual scientific data is conveyed in the typical frustration of Simon Upton, a New Zealand parliamentarian and former chairman of the CSD, when he asked “is it too much to hope that one day science will develop a generally agreed picture, in sufficiently useful detail, of the state of the world environment?” Upton, ‘Roadblocks to Agenda 21’, p. 13. Such a statement implies that science tends towards a perfect and complete picture of the natural world – an assumption roundly critiqued in Norgaard, *Development Betrayed*, chapter 12; and S. Lélé and R. B. Norgaard, ‘Sustainability and the Scientists Burden’, *Conservation Biology*, 10, 2, (1995), pp. 354 – 365.

<sup>127</sup> UN, *Plan of Implementation*, #23.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, #37.

<sup>129</sup> Von Moltke, ‘Governments and International Civil Society in Sustainable Development’, p. 353.

help one another gain access to financial resources, benefit from the opening of markets, ensure capacity-building, use modern technology to bring about development and make sure that there is technology transfer, human resource development, education and training to banish underdevelopment forever.<sup>130</sup>

This positive view of science and technology was echoed in the *Plan of Implementation*, which called for the development and commercialisation of cleaner and more efficient fuels, including biomass, liquid gas, renewables and “new or improved products or technologies”, and the development of technologies for “water harvesting from coastal fogs.”<sup>131</sup> In response to climate change states were urged to “develop and transfer technological solutions.”<sup>132</sup> One UN bureaucrat noted the heavy emphasis at Johannesburg on technical forms of knowledge, stemming at least in part from “certain governments who do believe that technology holds many of the solutions to many of the problems.”<sup>133</sup> A lead South African negotiator suggested that with regard to climate change, the US solution is a “technological fix.”<sup>134</sup> Technology and “knowledge transfers” to developing countries were urged, which were to be aided “in accessing the know-how and expertise required in order for them to make independent use of this knowledge in pursuing their development goals.”<sup>135</sup>

This faith in objective science, risk assessment and ‘green’ technology was underpinned by a neo-liberal confidence in the ability of free market mechanisms to achieve sustainable development. The dominant discourse in Johannesburg was that “environmental problems are solvable through developing and implementing better technology, voluntary action and greater use of market mechanisms, such as trading permits.”<sup>136</sup> Sustainable development would be achieved, it was argued, by releasing the natural energy of the marketplace and by providing an enabling economic and political framework. As such the *Plan of Implementation* repeatedly stressed the need to create “an enabling environment for investment” as the basis for sustainable development.<sup>137</sup> It called for the continued promotion of “open, equitable, rules-based,

<sup>130</sup> UN, *The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development*, #18.

<sup>131</sup> UN, *Plan of Implementation*, #9 and 26e.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, #38e and 38g.

<sup>133</sup> Interview with Tonya Vaturi, Programme Associate for Major Groups, Division for Sustainable Development, DESA, (New York, 16/10/2007).

<sup>134</sup> Interview with Alf Wills, Deputy-Director General of DEAT, (Pretoria, 26/09/2006).

<sup>135</sup> UN, *Plan of Implementation*, #7f; 7j; 28; 33a; 37c; 54k, 106d.

<sup>136</sup> P. Rutherford, “‘Talking the Talk’: Business Discourse at the World Summit on Sustainable Development”, *Environmental Politics*, 12, 2, (2003), p. 147.

<sup>137</sup> UN, *Plan of Implementation*, #4; 9f; 83; and 141.



predictable and non-discriminatory multilateral trading and financial systems”, and asserted that “a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system, as well as meaningful trade liberalisation, can substantially stimulate development worldwide, benefiting countries at all stages of development.”<sup>138</sup> Economic growth, poverty eradication and sustainable development were presented as mutually reinforcing, all flowing naturally from the creation of an enabling domestic environment.<sup>139</sup>

Through these regimes of neutral and objective science, risk assessment, technological solutions and market rationality the partnership approach presented a thoroughly de-politicised and expert-dominated articulation of sustainable development. Within such a framework participants were required to “supplement their delegations with scientists, technical experts, industry representatives”, often to the exclusion of political lobbyists.<sup>140</sup> One UN staff member conceded that in terms of major group participation in the CSD, “since the WSSD there has been more of a focus on technicians, expert practitioners that work in the field, and less of an emphasis on advocates.”<sup>141</sup> The Global Deal’s recognition of the fundamentally political and ethical nature of sustainable development was largely missing from the partnerships approach.

### **Techniques and technologies**

Instead of multilateral regulations and targets the partnership approach to sustainable development regarded the deployment of specific, focussed, multi-stakeholder partnerships as the most efficient form of implementation. According to their supporters, “progress toward sustainable development requires many more – and more complex – partnerships. ... We can manage cooperatively what we cannot manage individually.”<sup>142</sup> The *Plan of Implementation* proclaimed the need to “enhance partnerships between governmental and non-governmental actors, including all major groups, as well as volunteer groups, on programmes and activities for the achievement of sustainable development at all levels.”<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid, #47a, and 141.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid, #83.

<sup>140</sup> Chasek, *Earth Negotiations*, p. 204.

<sup>141</sup> Interview with Tonya Vaturi, Programme Associate for Major Groups, Division for Sustainable Development, DESA, (New York, 16/10/2007).

<sup>142</sup> Holliday *et al*, *Walking the Talk*, p. 150.

<sup>143</sup> UN, *Plan of Implementation*, #168.

Several strategies were used by advocates of the partnership approach to minimise and restrict the scope and number of binding commitments in the text. The proliferation of phrases such as ‘as appropriate’; ‘significant improvement’; ‘where applicable’; ‘enhance and accelerate’; and ‘the development of measures’ in the final text of the *Plan of Implementation* had the effect of watering-down specific targets and timeframes, as well as introducing a more flexible approach. Even where precise targets were established or re-stated, advocates of the partnership approach inserted their own caveats. In one revealing example, whilst the *Plan of Implementation* retained the overseas development aid target of 0.7 per cent of GNP, the final US statement noted that

the United States reaffirms that it does not accept international aid targets based on percentages of donor gross national product. The United States does believe that aid should be increased to those developing countries making a demonstrated commitment to governing justly, investing in their own people, and promoting enterprise and entrepreneurship.<sup>144</sup>

A similar clarification was made by the US with respect to paragraph 44(o) on the development of a regime for sharing and safeguarding the benefits of genetic resources. During the negotiation of this paragraph the words “legally binding” had been deleted from in front of the word “regime.”<sup>145</sup> Accordingly the final statement of the US clarified that “in the light of this negotiating history, the United States understands that the undertaking envisaged in this paragraph would not entail the development of a legally binding instrument.”<sup>146</sup>

Whilst many critics viewed these attempts to dilute agreements, targets and timeframes as simple obstructionism, and partnerships as merely a device to evade stronger commitments to sustainable development, it is undeniable that across the JUSCANZ delegations there were many enthusiastic supporters of partnerships and substantial amounts of money were pledged through these instruments. The WSSD resulted in the announcement of 251 partnerships, with an overall financial value of US\$235 million.<sup>147</sup> As of June 2004 the financial contributions of the partnerships had

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<sup>144</sup> ‘Closing Plenary’, in UN, *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, #20. See also Lightfoot, ‘A Good International Citizen?’, p. 463.

<sup>145</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, pp. 110 – 111.

<sup>146</sup> ‘Closing Plenary’, in UN, *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, #20.

<sup>147</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, pp. 140 – 142.

increased to US\$1.02 billion.<sup>148</sup> Designated as the focal point for the partnerships, the CSD established and updates a searchable internet database, on which details of the now 344 partnerships (as of September 2008) can be accessed.<sup>149</sup> During the Summit the US announced projects and partnerships in the areas of water and sanitation (US\$970 million), energy (US\$43 million), health (US\$2.3 billion, some of which had already been promised prior to the WSSD), agriculture (US\$90 million), and forestry (US\$53 million), most of which were arranged outside of the CSD process.<sup>150</sup> Even those negotiators who were fiercely critical of American blocking tactics on binding targets conceded that when it came to partnerships, “the US fielded some good people who really put a lot of effort into making these real, credible things.”<sup>151</sup>

During the WSSD, countless debates were held on how, or whether, the Type II partnerships were to be regulated and monitored, to whom they would be accountable, and what relationship they would have to the multilateral texts.<sup>152</sup> Many wanted the UN to have a strong role in coordinating and monitoring partnerships, and some wanted to link specific partnerships with specific sections of text in the *Plan of Implementation*.<sup>153</sup> The strongest advocates of partnerships stressed however that too strict monitoring and accountability would stifle the creativity and flexibility of this approach. Hale and Mauzerall argued that

top-down accountability is neither workable nor desirable for the WSSD partnerships. A centralised agency charged with monitoring and sanctioning deviant partnerships would drain resources from development efforts while undermining the decentralised, flexible spirit that gives partnerships their strength and deterring potential partners from participating.<sup>154</sup>

Advocates claimed “the value of voluntary initiatives is precisely in bringing together actors who believe they can achieve results by themselves and do not need an external body to monitor their actions.”<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Whilst this four-fold growth in funding is impressive, commentators suggest it may be more due to the re-classification of existing large projects as Type II partnerships. T. N. Hale and D. L. Mauzerall, ‘Thinking Globally and Acting Locally: Can the Johannesburg Partnerships Coordinate Action on Sustainable Development?’, *Journal of Environment and Development*, 13, 3, (2004), p. 235.

<sup>149</sup> CSD partnerships database, <http://webapps01.un.org/dsd/partnerships/public/welcome.do>

<sup>150</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 140.

<sup>151</sup> Interview with Chippy Olver, Director General of DEAT and chairman of JOWSCO, (Johannesburg, 05/10/2006).

<sup>152</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 96.

<sup>153</sup> Interview with Diane Quarless, Vice Chair and Rapporteur on the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee for the WSSD, and co-Chair of Partnership Initiatives, (New York, 17/10/2007).

<sup>154</sup> Hale and Mauzerall, ‘Thinking Globally and Acting Locally’, p. 226.

<sup>155</sup> B. Stigson, ‘A business perspective on partnerships’, in Witte *et al*, *Progress or Peril?*, p. 45.

The Type II partnerships encouraged actors to monitor and assess their own performance. Hale and Mauzerall stressed the importance of “horizontal accountability” within partnerships, where standards and performance are self-assessed by participants.<sup>156</sup> The UN’s guidance notes on partnerships stressed that partners “should specify arrangements to monitor and review their performance against the objectives and targets they set and report in regular intervals (‘self-reporting’).”<sup>157</sup> The CSD has sought to encourage regular self-auditing of partnerships by sending out questionnaires and requests for updates on progress for its online database. The UN reported in 2006 that “the information contained in the partnerships database is provided to the secretariat by lead partners of registered partnerships. Requests for updates are sent out annually.”<sup>158</sup> Such expectations, together with the requests for industry sector reports prior to the WSSD, have encouraged greater reflexivity within many businesses and increased the profile of sustainability within the private sphere.<sup>159</sup> These techniques of voluntary self-auditing and introspection are characteristic of advanced liberal government, whereby standards of responsibility and ‘proper conduct’ are encouraged and internalised, at a distance from regulatory or legal centres of authority.<sup>160</sup>

Opinions are divided on the long-term significance of the CSD-accredited partnerships and the online database. Sceptics have pointed out that businesses have been slow to join these partnerships, and the most numerous partners are international organisations, states, and NGOs.<sup>161</sup> One enthusiastic advocate of the Type II partnerships at the WSSD described their current situation as “moribund.”<sup>162</sup> In a study of CSD-accredited partnerships in 2003, Hale and Mauzerall noted that only 2 per cent of projects had corporations as leading partners; 78.8 per cent of partnerships contained no partners at all from the private sector, and “in monetary terms,

<sup>156</sup> Hale and Mauzerall, ‘Thinking Globally and Acting Locally’, p. 226. See also Foreman and Segaar, ‘New Coalitions for Global Governance’, p. 220.

<sup>157</sup> UN, *Guiding Principles for Partnerships*.

<sup>158</sup> UN, *Report of the Secretary-General to the 14<sup>th</sup> Session of the CSD, Thematic cluster for the implementation cycle 2006-2007: Partnerships for Sustainable Development*, 01-12/05/2006, (New York; UN, 2006), #70.

<sup>159</sup> Interview with Arend Hoogervorst, environmental consultant with Eagle Environmental, (Durban, 13/12/2006).

<sup>160</sup> Abrahamsen, ‘The Power of Partnerships in Global Governance’, p. 1461; A. Barry, ‘Ethical Capitalism’, in Larner and Walters, *Global Governmentality*, p. 201.

<sup>161</sup> CSD partnerships statistics,

[http://webapps01.un.org/dsd/partnerships/public/partnerships/stats/partners\\_org\\_types.jpg](http://webapps01.un.org/dsd/partnerships/public/partnerships/stats/partners_org_types.jpg)

See also Andonova and Levy, ‘Franchising Global Governance’, p. 23.

<sup>162</sup> Interview with Diane Quarless, Vice Chair and Rapporteur on the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee for the WSSD, and co-Chair of Partnership Initiatives, (New York, 17/10/2007).

corporations account for less than 1 per cent of the partnerships' funding."<sup>163</sup> This would appear disappointing, given the explicit rationale of the partnerships was to harness the energy, resources and flexibility of the private sector. In most cases the CSD partnerships have states or international organisations as the lead partners and chief financiers, and they often appear to simply be the re-packaging of existing projects.<sup>164</sup> Andonova and Levy have argued that the "participation in the WSSD partnerships is uneven and mirrors rather than challenges prevailing patterns."<sup>165</sup> They also point out that "some high-profile initiatives that seemed to reflect the spirit of the partnership idea bypassed the process in Johannesburg out of a sense that it was irrelevant", including the Mega-Diversity Initiative, a partnership between the 15 most 'bio-diverse' countries.<sup>166</sup> One industry consultant noted that he didn't "think industry had really understood how the partnerships would work" at the WSSD, and did not have the interest or capacity to get deeply involved in projects that might diverge from their core business.<sup>167</sup> It was significant that many sought to pursue partnerships elsewhere; "under the auspices of the Business Action for Sustainable Development, 95 partnership initiatives were announced in the lead up to the WSSD. But almost none of these partnerships chose to register with the WSSD partnership process."<sup>168</sup>

There are thus significant questions over the impact and future of the CSD partnership process. Viewed in isolation, it certainly is not a viable alternative approach to multilaterally-negotiated, state-led sustainable development, nor was it intended to be so. The Type II partnerships are therefore often dismissed as unimportant, a forgettable initiative designed to rescue a failing Summit.<sup>169</sup> Yet, as Andonova and Levy argue, the Type II outcomes "grew out of a deeper strategic

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<sup>163</sup> Hale and Mauzerall, 'Thinking Globally and Acting Locally', pp. 230 – 231. See also UN, *Report of the Secretary-General to the 12<sup>th</sup> Session of the CSD, Thematic cluster for the implementation cycle 2004-2005: Partnerships for Sustainable Development*, 14-30/04/2004, (New York; UN, 2004); and UN, *Partnerships for Sustainable Development*.

<sup>164</sup> Hale and Mauzerall, 'Thinking Globally and Acting Locally', p. 235; Ivanova, 'Partnerships, International Organisations and Global Environmental Governance', p. 23.

<sup>165</sup> Andonova and Levy, 'Franchising Global Governance', p. 19.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>167</sup> Interview with Arend Hoogervorst, environmental consultant with Eagle Environmental, (Durban, 13/12/2006).

<sup>168</sup> Andonova and Levy, 'Franchising Global Governance', p. 30.

<sup>169</sup> Gutman, 'What did WSSD Accomplish?', p. 23.

understanding” and they “exemplify a broader phenomenon of transnational governance networks.”<sup>170</sup> As Martens points out,

there is hardly any multinational corporation on the Fortune 500 list which does not run a partnership project with a UN organisation. Some of the most active companies include BP, Coca Cola, Daimler Chrysler, Microsoft, McDonald’s, Nike, Novartis, Shell and Starbucks.<sup>171</sup>

Figures compiled by the UN in 2008 show a dramatic transformation in the source of financial flows to the developing world over the previous decade. Whilst official development assistance (ODA) “doubled from \$50 billion in 1998 to \$104 billion in 2006” it fell as a proportion of total financial flows, whilst private flows (excluding remittances) soared “from \$193 billion in 1998 to \$647 billion in 2006.”<sup>172</sup> These figures suggest that private investment and voluntary partnerships are increasingly dominating global development, further blurring lines between development and investment, public and private.

As such the limited success of the CSD process should not obscure the broader and increasing strength of neo-liberal rationalities of government. Whilst many private sector partners see no need to conduct their partnerships through the CSD and are wary of UN bureaucracy, the scale of corporate involvement in the implementation and governance of sustainable development is on the increase.<sup>173</sup> The UN Secretary-General’s report to the CSD in 2006 concluded that “partnerships have been recognised as one of the most innovative outcomes of the World Summit and as having an important role to play in delivering World Summit commitments.”<sup>174</sup> As a rationality of government partnerships are fast becoming the dominant approach within mainstream sustainable development discourse.

### **Production of subjectivities**

The discourse of partnerships posed a challenge to the state-centrism of the Global Deal approach, and constructed a much broader range of self-governing actors

<sup>170</sup> Andonova and Levy, ‘Franchising Global Governance’, p. 19.

<sup>171</sup> Martens, *Multistakeholder Partnerships*, p. 20.

<sup>172</sup> UN, *Report of the Secretary-General to the 16<sup>th</sup> Session of the CSD*, #80 – 91.

<sup>173</sup> Interview with Patricia Chaves, Senior Sustainable Development Officer and Head of Partnerships Team in the Division for Sustainable Development, DESA, (New York, 16/10/2007); J. Elkington, ‘Governance for Sustainability’, *Corporate Governance*, 14, 6, (2006), pp. 522 – 529; Falkner, ‘Private Environmental Governance and International Relations’.

<sup>174</sup> UN, *Report of the Secretary-General to the 14<sup>th</sup> Session of the CSD*, #75.

as necessary and important for the implementation of sustainable development. As Zehra Aydin from the CSD explained,

the minute you become partners you have to be considered differently, you are no longer just an NGO, a private sector actor, you are also not just a member state, you are a partner with a specific commitment. And that puts you in a completely different light.<sup>175</sup>

The partnership rationality of government relied not merely on states creating and enforcing binding regulations, but rather on states facilitating the creation of partnerships between business, international institutions, civil society and other actors, all of whom were expected to exercise responsible self-government. As the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* concluded,

the upsurge of social and business support for sustainable development, the widespread nature and acceptance of Type II partnerships and increasing recognition that multilateral environmental agreements, not to mention programmes for poverty eradication and improved sanitation, require efforts and actors beyond the State. Such efforts push the concept of multilateralism beyond a purely State-centric perspective.<sup>176</sup>

This argument is easily misinterpreted as the claim that states are losing power and sovereignty to non-state actors in a zero-sum competition within global governance.<sup>177</sup> In contrast, seeing partnerships as a rationality of advanced liberal government draws attention to the ways in which states and a whole range of other actors are recast, expanded, transnationalised and implicated in network forms of governance in flexible and multi-centric ways.

State institutions and actors continued to play important roles as leading partners for sustainable development, and it was those with the greatest capacity that predominated: the five most active countries in the WSSD partnerships were France, South Africa, the USA, Japan and Indonesia.<sup>178</sup> Andonova and Levy noted that the

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<sup>175</sup> Interview with Zehra Aydin, UN focal point for Major Groups, (New York, 15/10/2007).

<sup>176</sup> *Earth Negotiations Bulletin, World Summit on Sustainable Development*, 22, 51, (Manitoba; International Institute for Sustainable Development, 06/09/2002), p. 17.

<sup>177</sup> For critiques of these assumptions see Clark, *Globalization and International Relations Theory*, especially chapter 3; A. Etzioni, 'The Capabilities and Limits of the Global Civil Society', *Millennium*, 33, 2, (2004), pp. 341 – 353; Falkner, 'Private Environmental Governance and International Relations', pp. 76 – 77; K. Raustiala, 'States, NGOs and International Environmental Institutions', *International Studies Quarterly*, 41, (1997), pp. 720 – 724; and Sending and Neumann, 'Governance to Governmentality', p. 654.

<sup>178</sup> Andonova and Levy, 'Franchising Global Governance', p. 27. South Africa and Indonesia were enthusiastic partners not least because of their hosting of the WSSD and PrepCom IV respectively.

most active countries were those who tended “to give or receive large amounts of foreign aid”, and to “have large numbers of NGOs, have large populations, and have more extensive national environmental planning infrastructures.”<sup>179</sup> Yet, rather than states being automatically the prime actors for sustainable development, their role depended on their capacity to form partnerships. Different states and state institutions became involved with partnerships in different ways: some state departments co-operated with businesses in developing new forms of technology; others contracted out community healthcare or biodiversity protection to civil society organisations.<sup>180</sup> The participation of many developing countries in the WSSD was facilitated by the GEF, which financed a partnership “to increase opportunities for legislators from developing countries to actively participate in the WSSD and its preparatory process.”<sup>181</sup> Similarly, many large international NGOs such as the Heinrich Böll Foundation, as well as private funders, have sponsored and facilitated the capacity of developing states to participate in global governance.<sup>182</sup>

The Type II partnerships therefore recognised and legitimised many of the ways in which non-state actors already participated in the implementation and governance of sustainable development. Yet they also provided new opportunities to some of the largest international NGOs, whose scientific expertise, networks of contacts and experience of project management made them valued partners. Andonova and Levy noted that

large transnational NGOs have not in any way boycotted or even shied away from participation and leadership in Type II outcomes, because on balance taking a proactive position gives them a clear comparative advantage in the transnational governance process, enhances their resources, and provides a greater ability to influence the agenda and structure of partnership institutions.<sup>183</sup>

Such partnerships do not depend directly on state involvement, and one WSSD participant noted that “the various governments’ sidelining of the NGOs resulted in a number of NGOs making direct contact with the industry sector and exploring the

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid, pp. 26 – 28.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, p. 21; Falkner, ‘Private Environmental Governance and International Relations’, p. 77; and CSD partnerships database, <http://webapps01.un.org/dsd/partnerships/public/welcome.do>

<sup>181</sup> GEF, *GEF Contribution to the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, (Washington DC; GEF Council, 2002), p. 6.

<sup>182</sup> P. S. Chasek, ‘NGOs and State Capacity in International Environmental Negotiations: The Experience of the Earth Negotiations Bulletin’, *RECIEL*, 10, 2, (2001), pp. 168 – 176.

<sup>183</sup> Andonova and Levy, ‘Franchising Global Governance’, p. 21.



area of partnerships of mutual benefit.”<sup>184</sup> Andonova and Levy’s study recorded that “most of the leading NGOs are large transnational organisations such as the IUCN and the Nature Conservancy, and considerably fewer are led by national and local groups.”<sup>185</sup> Similarly, large international institutions such as UNEP, UNDP and the World Bank have been enthusiastic advocates of partnerships.<sup>186</sup> Andonova and Levy showed that 29 per cent of CSD partnerships in 2003 had international organisations as the leading partner, which was “consistent with the hypothesis that secretariats of international institutions will be among the most eager suppliers of partnership in an effort to reinvent their mission and legitimacy.”<sup>187</sup> Ivanova suggests that partnerships “offer a particularly propitious opportunity for international organisations to regain a leading role in global governance.”<sup>188</sup>

The most dramatic re-casting achieved by the partnership discourse has involved the private sector however. By recognising corporations as essential partners, the energy, innovation, technical skill and financial muscle of the private sector was mobilised behind sustainable development. For the first time in a major environmental conference, business lobbyists like the International Chamber of Commerce, WBCSD and BASD, as well as individual firms, participated in the official summit process. This explicitly built on the assumption behind the Global Compact: “that the UN and the private sector have a common interest in the promotion of sustainable development on a global scale.”<sup>189</sup>

For many critical commentators this new prominence was interpreted as the “corporate takeover” of the sustainable development agenda by business interests.<sup>190</sup> Paul Rutherford’s analysis of business discourses at the WSSD draws attention to how corporate participants sought to “position largely voluntary initiatives as concrete

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<sup>184</sup> A. Hoogervorst, *WSSD: A Focussed Feedback Report for Umbogintwini Operations Services*, 2002, (unpublished), p. 3.

<sup>185</sup> Andonova and Levy, ‘Franchising Global Governance’, p. 23.

<sup>186</sup> Bull *et al*, ‘Private Sector Influence in the Multilateral System’, p. 493.

<sup>187</sup> Andonova and Levy, ‘Franchising Global Governance’, p. 23.

<sup>188</sup> Ivanova, ‘Partnerships, International Organisations and Global Environmental Governance’, p. 20.

<sup>189</sup> Thérien and Pouliot, ‘The Global Compact’, p. 56.

<sup>190</sup> M. Brooks, ‘Earth Summit: No Solution for the Masses, Just a lot of Hot Air’, *In Defence of Marxism*, (12/09/2002). See also K. Bruno and J. Karliner, *earthsummit.biz: The Corporate Takeover of Sustainable Development*, (Oakland CA; Food First Books, 2002); Eco-Equity, *Critical Considerations about Type 2 partnerships*; interview with David Fig, academic and consultant, (Johannesburg, 19/09/2006); Friends of the Earth, *That’s all very well but... Friends of the Earth’s Guide to Partnerships*, WSSD press release; ‘International Youth Statement’, in Civil Society Secretariat, *A Sustainable World is Possible*, p. 122; N. Klein, ‘The Summit that couldn’t save itself’, *The Guardian* (UK), 04/09/2002; and Middleton and O’Keefe, *Rio Plus Ten*, p. 94. See appendix B, image #1.

empirical indicators of progressive and substantial forms of environmental change”, and used these examples to avoid “specific commitments to stricter forms of external environmental accountability.”<sup>191</sup> Yet, rather than seeing business enthusiasm for discourses of corporate social responsibility as solely a means to evade regulation, he draws attention to the ways in which, through participation in the WSSD, “business seems to have gained an unprecedented level of ‘public’ legitimacy as a pivotal environmental actor.”<sup>192</sup> Whilst some corporate actors will no doubt continue to use the language of sustainable development to mask unsustainable or ecologically damaging practices, the partnership discourse at the WSSD established that the business sector “has a duty to contribute to the evolution of equitable and sustainable communities and societies.”<sup>193</sup>

This shift in the perceived role and status of business as a political and ethical actor can have far-reaching consequences. As Andrew Barry argues, “the ethical conduct of global business has become an object of both government and political action” and in so doing the ways in which companies conduct themselves, and the ways in which they are perceived by others, can shift.<sup>194</sup> He notes that “global corporations are now expected to be ethical and expect themselves to be ethical. Moreover, many go to great lengths to make their ethical concerns public and open to a limited degree of scrutiny.”<sup>195</sup> According to one industry consultant, the WSSD “was the first time I’d seen business taking environmental issues and sustainability issues seriously as a part of the business perspective.”<sup>196</sup> The UN has continued to promote corporate social responsibility through initiatives such as the Global Compact, and in 2008 the Secretary-General reported to the 16<sup>th</sup> session of the CSD that “corporate social responsibility has become a central element of corporate image in the global economy”, and that “a growing number of companies are adopting voluntary initiatives to ensure good working conditions and environmental performance throughout their supply chains.”<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Rutherford, ‘Talking the Talk’, p. 148.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid, p. 146.

<sup>193</sup> UN, *The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development*, #27.

<sup>194</sup> Barry, ‘Ethical Capitalism’, p. 207.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid, p. 195.

<sup>196</sup> Interview with Arend Hoogervorst, environmental consultant with Eagle Environmental, (Durban, 13/12/2006).

<sup>197</sup> UN, *Report of the Secretary-General to the 16<sup>th</sup> Session of the CSD*, #47.

Once seen as the historical enemy of environmentalists, the business sector was thus re-framed in Johannesburg as a convert to the cause of sustainable development and as a capable and willing partner in its formulation and implementation. Björn Stigson, President of the WBCSD, argued that

in Johannesburg, I believe business demonstrated a strong commitment to action that overcame the initial surprise of those who like to depict business as the absent villain or backroom schemer. Accused of 'hijacking' the Summit in its opening days, the large number of corporate delegates finally impressed most by exhibiting a genuine readiness for dialogue and initiative.<sup>198</sup>

Key players within the business sector were eager to play their role as cooperative and enthusiastic partners, and their representatives, BASD, were one of the most upbeat voices in the final multi-stakeholder session of the WSSD. According to the UN report they

expressed appreciation to Governments in voicing confidence in the ability of business to play a role in sustainable development through market mechanisms, and noted the need for cooperation in technology transfer and the role of consumers, especially youth. They noted awareness of the high standards by which business would be judged in undertaking partnership initiatives and grass-roots projects, and supported systems for business input into international institutions to create an environment of cooperation. Recognising the need for accountability and open reporting initiatives to build support and trust, they reiterated their willingness to work together with other major groups and governments in that regard.<sup>199</sup>

The prominence of the partnership approach at the WSSD had the effect of producing a whole new range of political actors implicated in sustainable development. Rather than sidelining states, the most powerful states were joined on the stage by international organisations and NGOs, as well as corporate actors. Claude Martin of the WWF summed this up at the end of the WSSD when he reflected that the future of multilateralism lay with “new constellations of enlightened governments, intergovernmental institutions, environmental and development NGOs, forward-looking companies, and creative thinkers.”<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Stigson, 'A business perspective on partnerships', p. 43.

<sup>199</sup> 'Multi-stakeholder event', in UN, *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, #5/7.

<sup>200</sup> C. Martin, 'The Future of Multilateralism', *WWF Opinion Editorial*, (04/09/2002).

*Sustainable development as advanced liberal governmentality*

The final outcomes of the Johannesburg negotiations therefore comprised official Type I texts which balanced the interventionist and disciplinary rationality of government of the Global Deal approach with the free-market voluntary governmentality of the partnership approach. Yet, by also including Type II partnerships as recognised outcomes, the WSSD outcomes overall worked to re-orientate sustainable development towards modes of advanced liberal government. Even the uneasy balance in the *Plan of Implementation* revealed the predominance of the flexible approach desired by the US and their allies. There were no new legal conventions agreed, few substantial promises of new official development assistance, and a general unwillingness to discuss trade or financial rules for fear of prejudicing negotiations elsewhere. Some new targets were agreed, most notably on sanitation, fishing and chemicals, but the hopes for an array of binding multilateral targets on issues like renewable energy and biodiversity were dashed. A World Solidarity Fund was agreed in principle, but contributions were to be voluntary and virtually nothing has been heard of it since.<sup>201</sup> Concrete progress on sustainable development was primarily envisaged as coming from voluntary, *ad hoc* partnerships, widely regarded as “precedent setting” and “the most novel outcomes” of the Summit.<sup>202</sup> “Let me repeat,” Kofi Annan made clear in the final press conference of the WSSD, “this is an era of partnerships.”<sup>203</sup> As such, commentators concluded that the “WSSD may increasingly be seen as the coming of age of new ways of addressing sustainable development at the global level.”<sup>204</sup>

Indeed in the post-Johannesburg era sustainable development has been increasingly discussed and implemented in these terms. Mukul Sanwal makes this clear when he notes that “entirely new policy instruments oriented towards partnerships between public and private sectors are increasingly important” in the

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<sup>201</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, pp. 103 – 104; interview with Alf Wills, Deputy-Director General of DEAT, (Pretoria, 26/09/2006).

<sup>202</sup> V. Moosa, interview with Richard Sherman, unpublished, (January 2004); and UK Parliamentary Environmental Audit Committee, *World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002: From Rhetoric to Reality*, Volume 1, (London; House of Commons, 2003), p. 14.

<sup>203</sup> K. Annan, *Press Conference by UN Secretary-General at conclusion of World Summit on Sustainable Development*, (Johannesburg, 04/09/2002).

<sup>204</sup> Bigg, ‘The World Summit on Sustainable Development’, p. 5.

global governance of sustainable development.<sup>205</sup> Consistent with a neo-liberal reliance on the extension of market principles he argues that “market creation is considered the most direct approach to solving the problem of biodiversity decline”, and “the recognition of the key role of capital markets in economic growth shifts the focus from government or multilateral aid to private investment as the driver of international cooperation and the spread of new technologies.”<sup>206</sup> Therefore, according to Sanwal, the task of “implementation requires going beyond traditional forms of cooperation between nation-states to global networks of state and nonstate actors, particularly the private sector”, in which the UN will function within part of a broader network of global environmental governance, the defining feature of which “will be interactive clusters of institutions and processes galvanising capital markets and supporting societal action.”<sup>207</sup> From a very different perspective Newell concurs, noting that “our understanding of governance has to decentre the idea that states are the exclusive providers of effective environmental governance.”<sup>208</sup> These changes are, for Sanwal, evidence of an “emerging global consensus around a new paradigm.”<sup>209</sup>

This new paradigm is characterised by techniques of advanced liberal governmentality. This rationality of government may well have many advantages over alternatives such as the Global Deal approach, including avoiding some of the pitfalls of attempts to construct a one-size-fits-all global development blueprint. As Foucault reminds us, new relationships of power and forms of government are never purely good or evil.<sup>210</sup> However, unlike Sanwal’s analysis, a governmentality perspective adopts a stance of criticism and politicisation and seeks to highlight the dangers of new forms of rule.

First, by compartmentalising sustainable development and rooting action in specific projects rather than more holistic visions at the WSSD, sustainable development’s uneasy reconciliation of environmental and development issues was threatened. The environmental dimension of sustainable development was frequently separated and dealt with through separate partnerships and instruments from economic and social issues. The political effects of this include a possible reviving of

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<sup>205</sup> M. Sanwal, ‘Evolution of Global Environmental Governance and the United Nations’, *Global Environmental Politics*, 7, 3, (2007), p. 4.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 4 – 6.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 6 and 9.

<sup>208</sup> Newell, ‘The Political Economy of Global Environmental Governance’, p. 520.

<sup>209</sup> Sanwal, ‘Evolution of Global Environmental Governance and the United Nations’, p. 6.

<sup>210</sup> Gordon, ‘Introduction’, p. xix.

historic tensions between ‘greens’ and ‘reds’, unravelling the ways in which *Our Common Future* and the ‘brown’ environmental justice discourse highlighted the necessity of addressing the environmental, social and economic causes of deprivation and degradation in an integrated way. By prioritising *ad hoc*, individual, supply-driven partnerships, issues where success is easily measurable are favoured ahead of more deeply-rooted, complex and structural issues which resist easy auditing, categorisation and benchmarking. Vulnerable issues and communities risk marginalisation, and a ‘tinkering’ mindset is adopted “which implies that the fundamentals are sound and only relatively minor adjustments are necessary.”<sup>211</sup>

Not only were the environmental, economic and social aspects of sustainable development frequently compartmentalised, but a specific and narrow construction of poverty as the dominant focus of the Summit meant that the language, values and forms of knowledge associated with the economic sphere were prioritised over others. The partnership approach to sustainable development deployed instrumentalist and economically-driven techniques of risk assessment and cost-benefit analysis as the dominant standard of truth and efficiency. Yet these rationalities not only result in the marginalisation of other actors and forms of knowledge, but are capable of doing great harm to complex and organic social and ecological relationships.<sup>212</sup> There are aspects of human experience which resist reduction to the calculation of risks, costs and benefits, whether it is the loss of a species like the polar bear, or a loved one from HIV/Aids or unclean water.<sup>213</sup> For Dryzek,

no matter how attractive economic prescriptions may be in instrumental terms, even to committed environmentalists, they help constitute a discourse, and a world, which those according higher priority to citizenship, democratic and ecological values find unattractive.<sup>214</sup>

As *The Jo’burg Memo* argued, “markets were never meant to achieve community or integrity, beauty or justice, sustainability or sacredness – and by themselves, they don’t.”<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Bigg, ‘The World Summit on Sustainable Development’, p. 13.

<sup>212</sup> Norgaard, *Development Betrayed*.

<sup>213</sup> Lohmann points out that “when a loved one has a potentially fatal disease, you don’t perform a cost-benefit analysis when deciding what to do.” Rather you do whatever you can regardless of the cost. L. Lohmann, *Carbon Trading: A Critical Conversation on Climate Change, Privatisation and Power*, Development Dialogue, 48, (Uppsala; Dag Hammarskjöld Centre and Corner House, 2006), p. 14.

<sup>214</sup> Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth*, p. 140.

<sup>215</sup> Sachs, *The Jo’burg Memo*, p. 56.

Finally, the political effects of the partnership approach included the concretisation of certain characteristics and forms of legitimate political participation. In order to be empowered, partners must be willing and able to participate. They must conduct themselves responsibly as well as possess useful knowledge, expertise and capacities. According to the logic of partnerships, a powerful mining corporation might be a more attractive partner than a community social movement or a democratically elected government; and an international development bank might be prioritised over a UN agency or an advocacy NGO. As such, partnerships are not neutral, value-free tools, but rather they prioritise certain types of actor, specifically those with technical expertise or project management skills. Given the prioritisation of scientific and technological forms of knowledge, and a mentality that stresses ‘getting the job done’ rather than more lengthy deliberative or democratic processes, private actors have tended to become more valued and important development partners than many small states, NGOs or social movements.

In such ways an advanced liberal rationality of government threatens to de-politicise sustainable development by framing it in terms of the most efficient and cost-effective management of partnerships for implementation. As critical commentators noted, the “concept of ‘partnership and stakeholders’ perpetuates the myth that there is a collective endeavour, and that all players are equal and conflicts of interest can be resolved by roundtables seeking consensus.”<sup>216</sup> The shift from more centralised and hierarchical forms of governance to voluntary, flexible partnerships does not mean that power relationships are bypassed or government is replaced with freedom, rather it represents a new form of rule at a distance according to a rationality based on the operation of the market.

## ***Conclusion***

This chapter has argued that the debates at the WSSD can be understood in terms of competing rationalities of government. The clashes between visions of a new

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<sup>216</sup> R. Hamann and N. Acutt, ‘How should civil society (and government) respond to “corporate social responsibility”? A critique of business motivations and the potential for partnerships’, *Development Southern Africa*, 20, 2, (2003), p. 257.

Global Deal and the advocates of Type II partnerships were not merely differences over whether to use multilateral targets or voluntary partnerships to implement sustainable development, but rather they were clashes between competing conceptions of how government should be exercised: over what, according to which standards of truth, and by whom. In 2008 the UN Secretary-General reported that

five years after the World Summit on Sustainable Development, there appears to be a growing acceptance that partnerships are now embedded in the international sustainable development dialogue and have become an integral part of the work of the United Nations system.<sup>217</sup>

This chapter is not claiming that partnerships have replaced multilateral agreements as the predominant form of environmental governance, or that states have been displaced as political actors. Rather it has argued that the WSSD represented a shift towards a new rationality of government, from a more disciplinary mode of government in which the population was a passive body to be regulated, to an advanced liberal mode of government in which the global population is both the means and the ends of government. This new rationality is one in which both multilateral regulations and individual partnerships could be deployed as a means of mobilising and channelling the energies of the worldwide population.

Re-orientating sustainable development towards voluntary partnerships and market-based rationalities has a number of political implications. Rather than a holistic and global vision, sustainable development government is instead conceived in more specific and compartmentalised ways. Poverty eradication was established as the primary focus for sustainable development, but it was a narrow, de-contextualised and de-politicised representation of poverty that dominated the partnership approach, to which technical and instrumental conceptions of science, risk assessment, technology and economics were deployed as the necessary solutions. The most important actors for sustainable development were increasingly judged in terms of their willingness and ability to participate in partnerships, rather than more democratic, ethical or political criteria. Perhaps most importantly, conceiving of sustainable development in terms of advanced liberal government threatens to de-politicise the politics of environment and development, relying on notionally free and equal partnerships, neutral science and the impartiality of the free market. There is

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<sup>217</sup> UN, *Report of the Secretary-General to the 16<sup>th</sup> Session of the CSD*, #75.



little space here for dissent or revolt, and relationships of power and conflict are marginalised through a focus on consensus and partnership. As a result

the market and its mechanisms are so dominant, and appear to offer such an efficient (and naturalised) means of muting conflict and struggle, that politics comes to be viewed as something odious and subversive rather than necessary to the life of human societies.<sup>218</sup>

Partnerships were thus presented as forms of governance which could “manage relationships that otherwise degenerate into counterproductive confrontation.”<sup>219</sup>

This “fetishisation of partnership” and norms of cooperation and consensus at the WSSD has thrown the role of democratic debate and dissent, and hence summits themselves, into question.<sup>220</sup> If bilaterally agreed partnerships are the way forward, are gatherings of international leaders and civil society in one place for a few days to negotiate political agreements still important as tools of global governance?<sup>221</sup> As Friends of the Earth pointed out, “partnerships happen anyway and do not need a major multilateral political Summit to deliver them.”<sup>222</sup> This was acknowledged in the *Plan of Implementation* which agreed to

streamline the international sustainable development meeting calendar and, as appropriate, reduce the number of meetings, the length of meetings and the amount of time spent on negotiated outcomes in favour of more time spent on practical matters related to implementation.<sup>223</sup>

Participants in Johannesburg questioned whether “one of the lessons to be learned from the WSSD 2002 could be not to put so much emphasis on this kind of inter-governmental meeting.”<sup>224</sup> The WSSD had the effect of re-orientating sustainable development towards practical and technical questions of implementation and bilateral voluntary partnerships, apparently eroding the necessity of summits themselves. Yet the assumption that such moments have a limited or declining role within advanced liberal rule is one that is questioned in the following chapter.

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<sup>218</sup> Lipschutz, *Globalization, Governmentality and Global Politics*, p. 58.

<sup>219</sup> J. M. Witte, C. Streck and T. Benner, ‘The Road From Johannesburg: What Future for Partnerships in Global Environmental Governance?’, in Witte *et al*, *Progress or Peril?*, pp. 63 – 64.

<sup>220</sup> Newell, ‘The Political Economy of Global Environmental Governance’, p. 523.

<sup>221</sup> Death, ‘No WSSD+5?’, Von Frantzius, ‘World Summit on Sustainable Development Johannesburg 2002’, p. 472.

<sup>222</sup> Friends of the Earth, *That’s all very well but...*

<sup>223</sup> UN, *Plan of Implementation*, #156a.

<sup>224</sup> Von Frantzius, ‘World Summit on Sustainable Development Johannesburg 2002’, p. 472.

## Chapter four

# Performing Sustainable Development: Governing by example at the WSSD

*As Africans, we were proud and privileged to host the leaders and representatives of the peoples of the world as they met to consider their response to the urgent challenge of sustainable development. At the same time, we were convinced that the ordinary people of our country understood that for a new and brighter world of hope to be born required that these leaders and representatives should convene in conference, freely to agree among themselves about what they needed to do together.*

**Thabo Mbeki, February 2004**<sup>1</sup>

### *Introduction*

In re-orientating sustainable development towards voluntary bilateral partnerships, it appeared that the WSSD marked the beginning of the end for multilateral summits convened to negotiate a consensus text. Yet to suggest that global summits have no role in the new formations of advanced liberal government is to underestimate their theatrical, performative and exemplary importance. The WSSD was far more than simply an institutional mechanism for the production of a set of outcomes. Following in the footsteps of the conferences in Stockholm and Rio, Johannesburg was a global festival, a summit of summits, which sought to encapsulate the state of global sustainable development and perform it to the world. This chapter demonstrates how the theatrical spectacle of the WSSD functioned as a technique of advanced liberal government, and as such constitutes a form of ‘exemplary government’ which established a stage and audience, assembled a particular cast of actors to perform their roles, and stage-managed and communicated their performances in particular ways.

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<sup>1</sup> T. Mbeki, ‘Foreword: What remains to be done is that we do’, in Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 6.

It is therefore misleading to regard the Summit as merely a ‘talkshop’ or a round of photo opportunities, hand shakes and signatures, and thus ephemeral to the main business of global politics.<sup>2</sup> Such are the impressions often given in discussions of the ‘theatre’ of summitry. Middleton and O’Keefe, for example, argue that “in the WSSD, as in all other summits, there is a degree of theatricality since much of the bargaining takes place before the event.”<sup>3</sup> They do not discuss this theatricality in any depth, nor do they appear to regard it as particularly interesting. They imply that the real politics of summitry is to be found in the negotiations and the outcomes. These dimensions are important of course, as the previous chapter showed. Yet the theatricality of the Summit is *in itself* interesting and important: the politics of spectacle, representation and symbolism are all ways in which the character and nature of global politics are constituted. Maurice Strong, UN Secretary-General at UNCED famously remarked that “the process is the policy.”<sup>4</sup> This chapter argues that ‘the process is the politics’. Thabo Mbeki’s conviction that ‘the ordinary people’ understood the need for such a conference of leaders indicates his grasp of the symbolic importance of the Summit. By meeting in Johannesburg and freely agreeing on the future course of global politics, he argued, the legitimacy of the international system was confirmed, even as new forms of governance were emerging.

This chapter shows how the Summit as an ensemble of processes and events worked to govern global politics. Adopting a Foucauldian approach to government as “the conduct of conduct” it analyses how the theatre of the WSSD was a specific practice of government which itself established certain fields of visibility, particular regimes of knowledge, specific techniques and technologies, and produced an identifiable cast.<sup>5</sup> Inspired by Geertz’ work on the theatre state in Bali it argues that the WSSD functioned as an “exemplary centre” which governed primarily through example rather than by decree.<sup>6</sup> Participants were repeatedly warned that “the eyes of the world will be fixed on Johannesburg during the WSSD”, and the rituals of summitry – the photo opportunities, the speeches, the multi-stakeholder dialogues, the press statements, even the disputes and the protests – were all part of the Summit

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<sup>2</sup> Seyfang and Jordan, ‘The Johannesburg Summit and Sustainable Development’, p. 19; Fomerand, ‘UN Conferences’.

<sup>3</sup> Middleton and O’Keefe, *Rio Plus Ten*, p. 95.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Haas, ‘UN Conferences and Constructivist Governance of the Environment’, p. 86.

<sup>5</sup> Foucault, ‘Governmentality’; Dean, *Governmentality*.

<sup>6</sup> Geertz, *Negara*, p. 13.

theatre for this global audience.<sup>7</sup> This chapter therefore develops an understanding of how summits are a technique of government at a distance, and function as “translation mechanisms”, or “loose and flexible linkages ... made between those who are separated spatially and temporally.”<sup>8</sup> Such a perspective suggests that, despite the growing importance of bilateral partnerships, multilateral summits continue to play an important role within forms of advanced liberal government.

### *The Theatre of the Summit*

The WSSD was a “summit of many summits”, with multiple venues, programmes and participants.<sup>9</sup> The wealthy northern suburb of Sandton housed the heart of the Summit at the luxurious Convention Centre, but the broader WSSD consisted of a diverse ensemble of parallel events which ranged further afield. The Global People’s Forum, the official civil society event, was held in a huge exhibition hall known as Nasrec in the south of the city about 30 minutes’ drive from Sandton (or up to two hours in Johannesburg traffic). Closer to Sandton, the Ubuntu Village was a cultural centre and exhibition tent where governments and civil society could interact and access hands-on technologies for sustainable development. The WaterDome housed water-themed events and sessions some twenty-five minutes from Sandton. The IUCN hosted an Environment Centre at Nedcor Bank, next to the official conference venue. Critical gatherings of civil society assembled at St Stithian’s College for the People’s Earth Summit and the South-South Biopiracy Summit, and there was a well-attended landless people’s camp near Nasrec at Shareworld, a dilapidated old amusement park. Environmental justice and farming activists congregated at Shaft 17, an old mine-turned conference centre.<sup>10</sup> Related events took place in other locations around South Africa, such as the International

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<sup>7</sup> Schroeder, *Rio to Jo’burg and Beyond*, p. 38. See also G. Lewis, ‘Paper Tigers, Red Herrings and Stalking Horses’, *Focus*, 26, (2002); opening statement by Klaus Topfer, Executive Director of the UNEP, in UN, *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, pp. 162 – 163.

<sup>8</sup> Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, pp. 48 – 51. In a similar way Barry highlights how the “visibility, knowledge and demonstration” of corporate ethics works to effect government at a distance. Barry, ‘Ethical Capitalism’, p. 198.

<sup>9</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 117.

<sup>10</sup> Munnik and Wilson, *The World Comes to One Country*, p. 57.

Youth Summit and the African Youth Summit at Mogwase in North West Province, and the Indigenous People's International Summit in Kimberley. There was much more to the WSSD, therefore, than just the official negotiations.

These events give some sense of the grand theatre of the occasion. In 1992 Strong's vision was for the Rio Summit to be "the greatest show on earth", and this ambition was replayed in the chaotic, daunting, historic and inspiring carnival atmosphere in Johannesburg.<sup>11</sup> One UN bureaucrat reflected this sentiment, recalling that whilst review sessions in New York have their value, "there will never be anything like the Summit. It was really a crucible moment for the world, and for the sustainable development community."<sup>12</sup> This sense of historical occasion was an integral part of the Summit's drama, as one sceptical activist conceded: "the only way to get anybody to do anything is through a high-level meeting like that, that's what they're motivated by."<sup>13</sup> Indeed, central to the Summit rationality was the aim to inspire and motivate as many as possible of those who participated in it, watched or read about it. The WSSD was a calculated attempt to influence the conduct of a whole range of diverse political actors through the theatre of the event itself.

### ***Fields of Visibility***

The theatricality of the WSSD depended upon its construction as a 'raised stage' in world politics, somehow 'above' the normal run of politics. Discourses of summitry invoke hierarchical and vertical metaphors in order to claim a superior breadth of vision from the rarefied atmosphere of the summit, asserting the political importance of the event through the number and prestige of its participants, and the importance of the issues under discussion.

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<sup>11</sup> Grubb *et al*, *The Earth Summit Agreements*, pp. 46 – 47; interview with Arend Hoogervorst, environmental consultant with Eagle Environmental, (Durban, 13/12/2006); interview with Bobby Peek, Director of Groundwork, (Durban, 07/12/2006); and interview with Richard Worthington, Earthlife Africa, (Johannesburg, 31/10/2006).

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Tonya Vaturi, Programme Associate for Major Groups, Division for Sustainable Development, DESA, (New York, 16/10/2007).

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Rebecca Pearl, Women's Environment and Development Organisation, (New York, 22/10/2007).

The summit vision reinforced the global scope of sustainable development discourse. Klaus Topfer, the Executive Director of UNEP, observed in his opening speech that “we suffer from problems of planetary dimensions. They require global responses.”<sup>14</sup> The first PrepCom opened with the Chair, Emil Salim, calling for the need to chart a collaborative course for sustainable development to avoid “crashing Spaceship Earth into an environmental disaster”, recalling the same metaphor used in the Brundtland Report.<sup>15</sup> The UN logo for the WSSD pictured a globe held in a hand or on the back of a dove.<sup>16</sup> The South African logo for the WSSD, entitled *People, Planet, Prosperity*, depicted a red African sun setting over a green Earth, creating a similarly wide vision for sustainable development.<sup>17</sup> For many commentators, the value of such “mega-conferences” was that they

make it possible to hold a global dialogue about global issues ... They force politicians to raise their horizons and consider strategic, longer-term questions that might otherwise be sidelined by day-to-day economic and political exigencies.<sup>18</sup>

By framing the Summit as ‘above’ normal politics, it claimed a perspective both detached and superior to ‘grassroots’ concerns, and more far-seeing than merely national or local-level politics.<sup>19</sup> The *Political Declaration* noted that UN conferences since Rio had “defined for the world a comprehensive vision for the future of humanity”, and proclaimed grandly that “we commit ourselves to act together, united by a common determination to save our planet, promote human development and achieve universal prosperity and peace.”<sup>20</sup>

Yet despite this assertion of global scope there were gaps and lacunae in the view from the Summit, and issues that were not up for discussion. Jens Martens has persuasively shown how “some of the central obstacles and blockades faced by multilateral cooperation have remained taboo” at summits like the WSSD.<sup>21</sup> For example, there is a “UN taboo against overt criticisms of member governments at UN-sponsored events”, preventing some policies and regimes from being openly or

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<sup>14</sup> Opening statement by Klaus Topfer in UN, *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, p. 162.

<sup>15</sup> Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development: Prepcom I*, 22, 1, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Appendix B, image #2.

<sup>17</sup> Appendix B, image #3.

<sup>18</sup> Seyfang and Jordan, ‘The Johannesburg Summit and Sustainable Development’, p. 23.

<sup>19</sup> Ferguson and Gupta, ‘Spatializing States’, p. 995.

<sup>20</sup> UN, *The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development*, #9 and 35.

<sup>21</sup> Martens, *The Future of Multilateralism after Monterrey and Johannesburg*, p. 9.

critically discussed.<sup>22</sup> At the WSSD this meant no protests against American preparations to invade Iraq, or criticisms of their broader unilateral foreign policy. The problems this caused were vividly conveyed during one incident in Bali.

In the first week of PrepCom 4, the slogan ‘what are we going to do about the United States?’ appeared on stickers within minutes of the remark slipping out over the unguarded microphone of an exasperated Emil Salim, Indonesian chairperson of PrepCom 4. Overnight it appeared on t-shirts around the Convention Centre. Because of UN regulations that no protests are allowed inside the convention centre, the t-shirts were ‘improved’ by security guards who put masking tape on the country name, leading NGO people to talk about ‘what are we going to do about you know who?’<sup>23</sup>

Representatives of major groups confirmed that “there are some things you can’t do at the UN. You can’t point to certain governments.”<sup>24</sup>

Other issues that could not be officially discussed or negotiated at the WSSD included the structure of the global economy and world trade.<sup>25</sup> Despite states’ refusal to discuss issues which might compromise the parallel WTO negotiations, many activists and lobbyists sought to highlight the importance of trade rules for sustainable development. Whilst the provisional text urged states to “enhance the mutual supportiveness of trade, environment and development, while ensuring WTO consistency”, an increasingly vociferous campaign emerged aimed at removing the text on ‘ensuring WTO consistency’.<sup>26</sup> The eventual removal of this text was received with delight by those who had feared it would establish WTO trade rules as superior to multilateral environmental agreements, but this defensive victory left the relationship between trade and the environment no clearer.

Whilst the WSSD claimed a global view therefore, certain issues were removed from view and there were limits to what could be discussed even in

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<sup>22</sup> A. M. Clark, E. J. Friedman, and K. Hochstetler, ‘The Sovereign Limits of Global Civil Society: A Comparison of NGO Participation in UN World Conferences on the Environment, Human Rights and Women’, *World Politics*, 51, 1, (1998), p. 20.

<sup>23</sup> Munnik and Wilson, *The World Comes to One Country*, p. 52.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Rebecca Pearl, Women’s Environment and Development Organisation, (New York, 22/10/2007).

<sup>25</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, pp. 100 – 102; Martens, *The Future of Multilateralism after Monterrey and Johannesburg*, p. 12; Najam, ‘Financing Sustainable Development’, p. 59; Pianta, *UN World Summits and Civil Society*, p. 16; Seyfang and Jordan, ‘The Johannesburg Summit and Sustainable Development’, p. 23.

<sup>26</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, pp. 99 – 100; Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development*, 22, 48, (Manitoba; International Institute for Sustainable Development, 02/09/2002), p. 3; Perez, ‘World Summit on Sustainable Development’, p. 20.

“diplomacy at the highest possible level.”<sup>27</sup> Yet the effects of such assertions of hierarchy and globality were significant. The performance of the Type II partnerships on the ‘world stage’ of the Summit, for example, made them central to the discourse of sustainable development. Those who participated on the Summit stage were constructed as important, necessary and legitimate political actors, able to rise above their day-to-day concerns to address issues of genuine global importance. The ‘raised stage’ of the Summit and its global field of vision was thus at the heart of re-affirming sustainable development as a planetary discourse and its participants as somehow ‘supra-political’.

### *Regimes of knowledge*

Traditionally the forms of knowledge underpinning summitry have been those of diplomacy and realist political science. The authoritative experts empowered at summits are experienced diplomats, foreign office ministers, international lawyers and heads-of-state, competing in terms of *realpolitik*, alliance-building, negotiating strategies, bargaining and legal phraseology.<sup>28</sup> These forms of knowledge continue to inform the negotiations at summits, yet increasingly moments like the WSSD rely at least as much on communicative forms of knowledge such as brand management, public relations and the choreography of public diplomacy. As such the new authoritative experts in summit politics include press officers, ‘nation branders’, celebrity politicians and communications strategists. These forms of public diplomacy are part of a broader trend towards the emergence of “brand states”, a trend in which communications gurus seek to repackage national identities in order to create “emotional resonance” among an increasingly global audience of consumers.<sup>29</sup>

In this respect the role of the media in Johannesburg was crucial. They were present in unprecedented numbers, and approximately 4,000 accredited journalists

<sup>27</sup> Dunn, ‘What is Summitry?’, p. 17.

<sup>28</sup> Kaufmann, *Conference Diplomacy*, p. 168.

<sup>29</sup> P. van Ham, ‘The Rise of the Brand State: The Postmodern Politics of Image and Reputation’, *Foreign Affairs*, 80, 2, (2001), p. 2. See also M. Aronczyk, “‘Living the Brand’: Nationality, Globality and the Identity Strategies of Nation Branding Consultants”, *International Journal of Communication*, 2, (2008), pp. 41 – 65.



attended the Summit.<sup>30</sup> As a pre-Summit panel on ‘The Media and Sustainable Development’ made clear, “news executives had enormous impact on what and how the media covered world events such as the Summit”, which in turn “moulded the impressions and understanding of audiences.”<sup>31</sup> Both state and non-state actors spent a great deal of time and effort on their media strategies, and venues like the Ubuntu exhibition tent were prime advertising spaces, attracting visitors at a rate of 30,000 per day and “featuring dozens of displays by organisations ranging from ChevronTexaco to the European Space Agency to numerous governments’ *Agenda 21* national committees.”<sup>32</sup> In order to make the most of these opportunities, countless advertising agencies, brand managers and public relations experts were employed by Summit participants.<sup>33</sup> The World Health Organisation, for example, employed the Meropa Communications consultancy to

assist with communications strategy, manage local media relations, deploy photographers, see to media conference arrangements, organise [the Health Environments for Children Initiative] Reception event, street theatre and procure public relations items (posters, T-shirts, banners).<sup>34</sup>

The WWF launched a “global multi-media campaign” in preparation for the WSSD, including “a website that allows visitors to send their personal SOS message to world leaders, [and] television and print advertising, alerting global audiences to the urgent need for action.”<sup>35</sup> One early South African NGO briefing paper advised civil society to “Kick some butt! Use the media. Embarrass the politicians.”<sup>36</sup> The South African NGO GroundWork helped organise a ‘Greenwash Academy Awards Programme’ in the style of the Oscars on 23 August 2002 as part of their campaign on corporate

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<sup>30</sup> J. M. Valenti, ‘Commentary: Media Coverage of the World Summit on Sustainable Development’, *Science Communication*, 24, 3, (2003), p. 381. The importance of the mass media to the evolution of summitry is discussed in Reynolds, *Summits*, p. 6.

<sup>31</sup> Media Tenor, ‘Special Edition for the World Summit on Sustainable Development’, *Media Tenor Research Journal*, 8, (2002), p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 106; Burg, ‘The World Summit on Sustainable Development’, p. 112.

<sup>33</sup> Aronczyk details how a relatively small international elite of national brand managers, drawn primarily from the private media and PR sectors and publishing in “quasi-academic journals”, are being employed to help “national governments to better manage and control the image they project to the world”. Aronczyk, ‘Living the Brand’, pp. 42 – 43.

<sup>34</sup> J. Clarke, *The World Health Organisation’s Strategic Engagement at the World Summit on Sustainable Development: Lessons Learnt at the Operational Level*, unpublished, undated.

<sup>35</sup> WWF, *WWF launches SOS Planet campaign for World Summit on Sustainable Development*, (12/08/2002).

<sup>36</sup> EMG, *The Road to Jo’burg: Making the Most of the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, (Cape Town; EMG, 2001), p. 4.

social accountability, which was widely and favourably covered by the media.<sup>37</sup> They presented first prize to BP for their 'Beyond Petroleum' advertising campaign, and drew attention to the actions of corporations which revealed the hypocrisy of their marketing.<sup>38</sup> As a result, "many of the potentially controversial partnerships, particularly those involving corporations, held their meetings on the outskirts of the Summit, fearing bad publicity."<sup>39</sup> Another prominent media campaign organised by local NGOs was the "toxic tour" for Summit delegates to the heavily polluted Steel Valley community in Vanderbiljpark, where community groups were trying to get compensation and clean-ups from government and local industries.<sup>40</sup>

The British WSSD delegation, like many others, had prepared an explicit communication strategy for the WSSD based around raising awareness of sustainable development issues in the UK media and highlighting the importance of the WSSD for the WEHAB agenda.<sup>41</sup> A post-Summit review by the Parliamentary Environmental Audit Committee concluded that "it is widely agreed that UK Government communications with the media at the Summit were very effective" and recorded that the delegation held daily press briefings and Margaret Beckett alone conducted 35 interviews.<sup>42</sup> Despite this, the report also noted that it "was disappointing the pre-summit media coverage in the UK persistently concentrated on the size and content of the proposed delegation and the level of luxury of their travel and accommodation", and furthermore that they "saw no evidence that such comment had been anticipated or that the Communications Strategy could counter it."<sup>43</sup> The report also criticised the government for "ineffective pre-planning" regarding media reactions to the composition of the delegation, and in particular the initial decision not to send then Environment and Agriculture Minister Michael Meacher MP to

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<sup>37</sup> Friends of the Earth International, GroundWork, EarthSummit.biz and Corpwatch, *2002 World Summit: Greenwash Academy Awards Programme*, (Johannesburg, 2002).

<sup>38</sup> GroundWork, *People's Action for Corporate Accountability*, (Johannesburg; 2002); B. Peek, 'People's Action for Corporate Accountability', *GroundWork's Quarterly Newsletter*, 4, 3, (2002).

<sup>39</sup> La Viña *et al*, 'The Outcomes of Johannesburg', p. 59.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Victor Munnik, activist and author, (Johannesburg, 25/10/2006); J. Cock and V. Munnik, *Throwing Stones at a Giant: An Account of the Steel Valley Struggle Against Pollution from the Vanderbiljpark Steel Work*, (Durban; Centre for Civil Society and UKZN, 2006), p. 25.

<sup>41</sup> UK Parliamentary Environmental Audit Committee, *World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002*, p. 20.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p. 19.

Johannesburg.<sup>44</sup> This apparent conflict within the government led to a media outcry, which was

led by environmental NGOs concerned that it appeared that the Government was prepared to leave behind one of its most experienced Ministers in terms of the Summit's agenda issues. Friends of the Earth went as far as to offer to pay Mr Meacher's air fare. Within 48 hours of this offer Mr Meacher was confirmed as part of the official delegation.<sup>45</sup>

The Parliamentary committee concluded that this indicated indecision and an "inadequate pre-Summit communications strategy", and that "it is essential that the Government's sustainable development communications review evaluates [the] Summit experience to inform future sustainable development communication strategies."<sup>46</sup>

The relative success and/or failure of Summit participants was therefore often assessed in terms of their communications strategies, the performance of a particular identity, and their ability to grab the media headlines. Theatrical speeches during the WSSD by Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe and Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez received widespread attention, with the latter displaying characteristic flair for the media sound-bite with the assertion that "heads-of-state go from summit to summit, whilst the majority of their people go from abyss to abyss."<sup>47</sup> Many state delegations took the opportunity of the Summit stage to announce initiatives and partnerships and ratify treaties. China, South Africa and Poland ratified the Kyoto Protocol just weeks before the WSSD, and Russia and Canada used the WSSD to announce their impending ratification of the Protocol. During the WSSD 48 countries and one international organisation signed, ratified or acceded to over 39 UN conventions.<sup>48</sup> The choice to announce these initiatives and commitments at the Summit was clearly calculated to maximise the political dividends and dramatic potential of the media circus in Johannesburg, and it is likely their timing owes more to the dictates of communicative rather than *realpolitik* forms of knowledge.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p. 17; telephone interview with Michael Meacher, UK Member of Parliament, (23/11/2007).

<sup>46</sup> UK Parliamentary Environmental Audit Committee, *World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002*, pp. 6 and 20.

<sup>47</sup> H. Chavez, *Address to the Plenary of the WSSD*, (02/09/2002); and R. G. Mugabe, *Address to the Plenary of the WSSD*, (02/09/2002). See also 'PAC supports Mugabe, Nujoma', *News 24 (SA)*, 08/09/2002; B. Peta, 'Mugabe and critics set for summit square-up on land issue', *The Sunday Independent (SA)*, 01/09/2002.

<sup>48</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 142.

In contrast the US suffered from negative press coverage at the WSSD, centring on their perceived obstruction of international agreements and the furious reaction to Secretary-of-State Colin Powell's speech in the final plenary session. During Powell's address "delegates jeered, booed, slow-clapped and shouted down the retired general, forcing him to stop speaking and causing conference president Nkosasana Dlamini-Zuma to repeatedly bang her gavel and call for order."<sup>49</sup> One journalist reported that "it was not easy to watch U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell being booed, some delegates walking out as he spoke. The poignant U.S. shame became page one news worldwide."<sup>50</sup>

The Summit organisers and hosts also mobilised media, branding and communicative forms of knowledge in order to 'sell' the Summit as a success and a triumph of international diplomacy. When negotiations did stall they were presented as simply diplomatic tactics rather than fundamental differences. According to one press report, "officials were confident that an apparent deadlock on some central issues could merely be attributed to negotiation tactics and should not necessarily be seen as insurmountable obstacles to the summit reaching consensus."<sup>51</sup> Another report revealed that

the current standoff between rich and poorer countries on issues of good governance and access to world markets is likely to continue until the 'last minute' of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), officials said on Sunday. They said holding back on commitments to good governance was the only real bargaining chip developing countries had to win concessions on equitable access to the markets of the developed world. 'It is quite normal in negotiations like these for people to want to hang on to the last minute.'<sup>52</sup>

Important political differences were thus represented as simple negotiating ploys in order to stress the official line that the Summit, as the *Political Declaration* phrased it, "confirmed that significant progress has been made towards achieving a global consensus and partnership among all the people of our planet."<sup>53</sup> According to the UN Secretary-General in the post-Summit press conference, "this Summit will put us on a path that reduces poverty while protecting the environment, a path that works for all

<sup>49</sup> 'US keeps stiff upper lip over Summit heckling', *Mail and Guardian* (SA), 04/09/2002.

<sup>50</sup> Valenti, 'Commentary', p. 383.

<sup>51</sup> 'SA welcomes world in spectacular fashion', *News 24* (SA), 25/08/2002.

<sup>52</sup> 'Talks will go to the wire', *News 24* (SA), 25/08/2002.

<sup>53</sup> UN, *The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development*, #5 and 10.

peoples, rich and poor, today and tomorrow.”<sup>54</sup> The South African newspaper, *The Star*, effusively praised the WSSD as “one of the greatest international conferences ever” and “an inspiration for our children.”<sup>55</sup> More circumspectly, one of the South African organisers concluded in hindsight that “ideally what you wanted was to have a carefully crafted public communications exercise that took real issues and debates out to a public audience. It happened to a certain degree. ... But we could have done more.”<sup>56</sup>

The Type II partnerships proved a media-friendly storyline for the news coverage of the WSSD, enabling reporters to focus on specific issues, regions and projects, rather than attempting to cover the slow and often torturous process of international negotiations. One media briefing suggested that

media people whom might find covering yet another world summit boring, could consider sending news crews to locations around the world where projects were going on that are related to the Summit. Heads of state shaking hands at the Summit will not be good international story material, neither good sound bite material.<sup>57</sup>

Images such as British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, planting a tree in Johannesburg’s Alexandra Township were therefore popular with both reporters and politicians.<sup>58</sup> The value of the WSSD as an advertising space and as a means of communicating and promoting the Type II partnerships goes some way to demonstrating the continued importance of summitry in an era of advanced liberal government.

One prime example of the importance of media relations, communicative strategies and public relations branding to the Summit was the joint media conference held by Greenpeace and the business lobbies WBCSD and BASD on 28 August. Despite their historical antipathy, they used a joint public meeting in order to make clear the urgent need to reduce carbon emissions, and “to urge governments to act more forcefully to provide an international political framework that enables, stimulates and rewards innovation and implementation.”<sup>59</sup> Billed as “an unprecedented event”, it was noted that “Greenpeace is well known for its disagreements with, and campaigns against, the activities of some of the companies

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<sup>54</sup> Annan, *Press Conference*.

<sup>55</sup> Quoted in Bond, *Talk Left, Walk Right*, p. 115.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Chippy Olver, Director General of DEAT and chairman of JOWSCO, (Johannesburg, 05/10/2006).

<sup>57</sup> Media Tenor, ‘Special Edition for the World Summit on Sustainable Development’, p. 2.

<sup>58</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 126.

<sup>59</sup> Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development*, 22, 44, p. 4.

who are members of the WBCSD” and “the WBCSD is well known for advocating a market-based and free trade approach to solving environmental problems, including voluntary measures that often differ radically from Greenpeace approaches.”<sup>60</sup> Yet, according to Björn Stigson, President of the WBCSD, “this is a good example of where the need to save the planet is so important it transcends any other differences we may have.”<sup>61</sup> That this meeting did not signal sudden consensus on policies was demonstrated when BASD later clarified that “the initiative in no way should be seen as business endorsing the Kyoto principles.”<sup>62</sup> In contrast to regimes of knowledge based around bargaining and *realpolitik* which posit relative gains as a fundamental measure of success at the summit, the communicative forms of knowledge which underpinned the WSSD promoted consensus and partnership as at the heart of ‘true’ success in Johannesburg. Thus both Greenpeace and WBCSD/BASD concluded that in this venue they had more to gain by emphasising their agreement than their differences.

It is only too easy to regard such press conferences as hypocritical ‘spin’ and meaningless rhetoric. Many regarded these theatrics as a deviation from the real business of politics, and wrote-off the WSSD as “the world’s biggest photo-opportunity.”<sup>63</sup> Similarly, Chasek has argued that in international conferences an impediment to the negotiation of agreements

is the tendency of participants to engage in oratory and grandstanding. Even when the public and the press are excluded from the meeting, the presence of a sizeable number of delegates – along with their attendant staff – often tempts participants into posturing.<sup>64</sup>

However, it is a mistake to regard the concern with communication and media relations as entirely ephemeral or misleading. As Geertz showed in his account of the theatre state in Bali, the spectacle and ceremony of the court “were not means to political ends: they were the ends themselves, they were what the state was for.”<sup>65</sup> Geertz’s work therefore “restores our sense of the ordering force of display, regard

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> P. Brown, ‘Big Business and Greenpeace Urge Action on Climate Change’, *The Guardian* (UK), 29/08/2002.

<sup>62</sup> Rutherford, ‘Talking the Talk’, pp. 148 – 149.

<sup>63</sup> EMG, *The Road to Jo’burg*, p. 2.

<sup>64</sup> Chasek, *Earth Negotiations*, p. 26. See also Fomerand, ‘UN Conferences’.

<sup>65</sup> Geertz, *Negara*, p. 13.

and drama.”<sup>66</sup> In a similar way, the communication of the theatre of the WSSD displayed a certain ‘ordering force’. Media stories about the Summit created the reality of the event. Lars Petersen’s study of Danish television coverage of the WSSD shows how “the media are not simply involved in reporting on a social world ... Rather, the media are actively involved in constituting the social world.”<sup>67</sup>

Simon Dalby’s analysis of media coverage of the 1992 Rio Summit has shown how stories in authoritative sources such as the *New York Times* in many ways create the reality of the event.<sup>68</sup> He showed how coverage focussed primarily on “diplomatic matters, the Bush administration’s positions and the isolation of the US delegation at the summit”, rather than the debates *per se*, with the result that “clearly what mattered here was who were the winners and losers in the great contests of geopolitical rivalry.”<sup>69</sup> This is a familiar media discourse for representing international politics in which it is framed in terms of conflict, competing interests and zero-sum power struggles between state actors. Many media stories on the WSSD reproduced this discourse, with the ‘failure’ of the Bali PrepCom particularly prominent.<sup>70</sup>

Yet an alternative media discourse of partnership, optimism and consensus was strongly promoted at the WSSD. Such a discourse was central to the way the Summit attempted to govern sustainable development at a distance through the conduct of conduct. In the run-up to Johannesburg, Seyfang and Jordan argued that

there is no doubt that mega-conferences are immensely successful at raising public attention on issues of global concern. There are very few other occasions when environmental issues have received such intense media attention as they did in the run up to the 1992 Earth Summit.<sup>71</sup>

Thus, “by commanding the front pages of national newspapers, the mega-conferences introduce debates about the environment and development to homes and businesses all over the world.”<sup>72</sup> As such “it is hard to overstate the role of the media in

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p. 121.

<sup>67</sup> L. K. Petersen, ‘Changing Public Discourse on the Environment: Danish Media Coverage of the Rio and Johannesburg UN Summits’, *Environmental Politics*, 16, 2, (2007), p. 208.

<sup>68</sup> S. Dalby, ‘Reading Rio, writing the world: the New York Times and the “Earth Summit”’, *Political Geography*, 15, 6/7, (1996), pp. 593 – 613.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, pp. 598 – 601.

<sup>70</sup> ‘Environment Talks end in Deadlock’, *BBC News* (UK), 07/06/2002; S. Fakir, ‘Too much baggage from Bali carried to Jo’burg’, *Business Day* (SA), 19/06/2002; “‘Poor Prospects’ for Earth Summit”, *BBC News* (UK), 15/07/2002; ‘UN conference fails to deliver’, *News 24* (SA), 08/06/2002; ‘UN Earth Summit hits snag’, *CNN* (US), 07/06/2002.

<sup>71</sup> Seyfang and Jordan, ‘The Johannesburg Summit and Sustainable Development’, p. 22.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

promoting sustainable development”, particularly in transferring information and ensuring transparency but also, as Petersen points out, in “the formation of public spheres and collective identities.”<sup>73</sup> From a governmentality perspective it is significant to note that, rather than primarily relying on diplomatic and realist forms of knowledge, events such as the WSSD increasingly are underpinned and informed by communicative regimes of knowledge.

### *Techniques and Technologies*

These communicative regimes of knowledge in the theatre of summitry were closely fused with the multiple techniques and technologies of staging at the WSSD. The similarity between the “contrived character” of modern politics and the explicit choreography of the theatre has been highlighted by Edelman, who noted that “in the drama, the opera, the ballet, in the display of paintings and in the performance of music setting is plotted and manipulated, just as it often is in the staging of governmental acts.”<sup>74</sup> More recently Constantinou has drawn attention to the ways in which the discourse of diplomacy imbues objects such as the foreign embassy and the conference table, floor and hall with instrumental significance.<sup>75</sup> The stage-managing of the WSSD was directed toward projecting a smooth and successful performance, yet these techniques also had particular effects for the participation of the various actors involved in the Summit.

Summits such as the WSSD are primarily constituted through the specific routines of UN diplomacy, what one South African negotiator referred to as “these arcane mechanisms of diplomacy and set formulas.”<sup>76</sup> The need to produce a consensus text required a raft of skilled interventions and techniques to manage the negotiations. Discussions proceeded section by section and once agreed they were only reluctantly re-opened for discussion.<sup>77</sup> When negotiations stumbled such as at

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<sup>73</sup> Von Moltke, ‘Governments and International Civil Society in Sustainable Development’, p 355; and Petersen, ‘Changing Public Discourse on the Environment’, p. 209.

<sup>74</sup> Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, p. 96.

<sup>75</sup> Constantinou, *On the Way to Diplomacy*, pp. 103 – 108.

<sup>76</sup> Interview with Chippy Olver, Director General of DEAT and chairman of JOWSCO, (Johannesburg, 05/10/2006).

<sup>77</sup> Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development: Prepcom IV Summary*, p. 7.



PrepCom IV, closed ‘informal-informals’ (informal meetings with limited access aimed at brokering deals) and ‘Friends of the Chair’ meetings were employed to identify the main antagonists and try to break the deadlock.<sup>78</sup> Despite through-the-night negotiations and emotional appeals from the Chair, the Bali PrepCom ended with a quarter of the text still in brackets and Emil Salim told media that “the meeting has failed to reach a consensus due to a lack of good faith and spirit of constructive dialogue.”<sup>79</sup>

Delegates therefore arrived in Johannesburg with much work to do. The WSSD began by negotiating in ‘the committee of the whole’, which was comprised of all the delegations. Multi-stakeholder sessions involving the major groups were held on various sustainable development topics, and the conference report noted that “the innovative nature of these discussions should be encouraged as a model for enhanced multi-stakeholder participation and engagement within the United Nations system.”<sup>80</sup> The negotiations in Johannesburg were always more than simply means to an end: they were regarded as an example to the rest of the world of how conferences should be conducted and disputes resolved.

Yet the plenary and multi-stakeholder sessions proved incapable of reaching consensus. Many of the outstanding sections were therefore forwarded to what was known as the ‘Vienna Setting’ which involved smaller groups of delegates negotiating on behalf of broader coalitions.<sup>81</sup> During this stage of the process informal networking and closed-door negotiations proliferated, as “small caucuses of delegates in darkened corners yielded agreed language and movement towards compromise formulae.”<sup>82</sup> Even here however it became clear that delegations were unable to reach agreement on many outstanding sections and several parts of the texts had to be forwarded for direct negotiations between ministers in what was termed the ‘Johannesburg Setting’.

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid, p. 14. For a similar observation on the Rio UNCED process, see Raustiala, ‘States, NGOs and International Environmental Institutions’, p. 733.

<sup>79</sup> ‘Failed UN talks a bad omen for Jo'burg summit’, *Mail and Guardian* (SA), undated; Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, pp. 88 – 90; Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development: Prepcom IV Summary*; and interview with Chippy Olver, Director General of DEAT and chairman of JOWSCO, (Johannesburg, 05/10/2006).

<sup>80</sup> N. Dlamini-Zuma, WSSD vice-president *ex officio*, ‘Comments on Multistakeholder Dialogues’, in UN, *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, p. 86. See also K. Bäckstrand, ‘Democratizing Global Environmental Governance? Stakeholder Democracy after the World Summit on Sustainable Development’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 12, 4, (2006), pp. 467 – 498.

<sup>81</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 122.

<sup>82</sup> Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development*, 22, 45, (Manitoba; International Institute for Sustainable Development, 29/08/2002), p. 3.

Here negotiators “could take high level political decisions on issues where the diplomats remained deadlocked”, although the danger of upsetting the delicate balance of the negotiations was greater.<sup>83</sup>

At the same time that negotiations were taken to the ministerial level, increased pressure was applied to delegates. “We held their feet in the fire”, Olver recollected, “Valli [Moosa, South African Minister for Environment and Tourism] worked them night and day.”<sup>84</sup> Techniques to facilitate consensus became even more pronounced.

Sunday’s relocation to smaller negotiating quarters combined physical restraints on the number of delegates with increased political pressure from the Chair to drive the process to its conclusion. With entrance to the meeting room and the adjoining corridor tightly controlled, delegates and observers were pushed to their limits as leaving the ‘zone’ to access food or proper sanitary facilities jeopardised re-entry. Seasoned veterans highlighted this as the typical ‘back room drama’ characteristic of negotiations, while others could only hope that the outcome would be worth the wait.<sup>85</sup>

Partly as a result, when the South African-authored *Political Declaration* emerged, it was adopted with limited discussion and few amendments. Observers commented that, “whether as an expression of faith in the hosts or through sheer exhaustion, delegates are clearly reluctant, at this late point, to negotiate another Johannesburg outcome.”<sup>86</sup>

Through these tried and tested techniques of diplomacy and negotiation, the Summit eventually produced negotiated outcomes, with the final version of the *Plan of Implementation* being agreed at 1:15 am on the last day.<sup>87</sup> These consensual outcomes were the primary indicators of a successfully choreographed performance. Yet the WSSD was about far more than just the production of a text and the Summit theatre required detailed staging, translation, programming, transportation, media provision, security, advertising and marketing, catering, logistics, accommodation and much more.<sup>88</sup> JOWSCO, the South African company set up to organise the Summit, “was faced with a major logistical challenge within the limited time available”, and

<sup>83</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 122; Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development*, 22, 47, p. 3.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with Chippy Olver, Director General of DEAT and chairman of JOWSCO, (Johannesburg, 05/10/2006).

<sup>85</sup> Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development*, 22, 48, p. 3.

<sup>86</sup> Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development*, 22, 49, p. 3.

<sup>87</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 124.

<sup>88</sup> JOWSCO, *Annual Report 2001-2002*.

transportation, budgeting, attendance and arranging venues proved particularly troublesome.<sup>89</sup> Despite these many logistical difficulties the Summit proceeded smoothly overall, and Thabo Mbeki proudly reported that Nitin Desai, the WSSD Secretary-General, had declared it to be “the best organised” UN conference he had participated in.<sup>90</sup>

The presence of thousands of NGOs, corporate representatives, major groups and media at the Summit also required a whole assemblage of techniques and technologies for managing and facilitating their participation.<sup>91</sup> First, those who wished to formally participate in the Summit had to be accredited by the Summit Secretariat which took a great deal of time and energy.

The enthusiasm for participating in the World Summit was so strong ... there was a flood of accreditation requests ... we viewed more than a thousand new applications ... over the year up to the summit we accredited exactly 737 organisations. This was a big part of the preparatory process – reviewing applications, deciding if the organisation met the criteria for accreditation, and then giving them a special status so they could come to Johannesburg.<sup>92</sup>

The accreditation process could be challenged by states, and three Tibetan NGOs were denied accreditation after China complained.<sup>93</sup> Despite the increased access and involvement of non-state actors, just as Raustiala observed in the 1990s, “NGO participation remains a privilege granted and mediated by states.”<sup>94</sup>

Once accredited, groups had access to the main conference venue and all its events. This gave them “much closer access to the governments, because they were in the same building, and they were having coffee and lunch and dinner in the same

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid, p. 1; interview with Chippy Olver, Director General of DEAT and chairman of JOWSCO, (Johannesburg, 05/10/2006); ‘Taxpayers to foot summit bill’, *Mail and Guardian* (SA), 09/09/2002; ‘Will the bigwigs buy into Jo’burg Summit?’, *Mail and Guardian* (SA), 18/06/2002; and ‘World Summit overspent budget by “modest” R188m’, *Mail and Guardian* (SA), 14/11/2002.

<sup>90</sup> T. Mbeki, ‘South Africa Can Take Pride in World Summit’, *ANC Today*, 2, 36, 6-12/09/2002.

<sup>91</sup> The participation of the major groups was a sensitive subject which had to be carefully managed in order to avoid giving offence to state delegates. As Zeyra Aydin, the UN official managing the major groups programme, explained, they were not “incorporated” into the Summit process, because “the word ‘incorporate’ can be considered too loaded. We increased access of major groups. That is different. Incorporate is sometimes understood as becoming a party at the table, making decisions, and that of course is not acceptable at the UN, this is a membership-driven organisation.” Interview with Zehra Aydin, UN focal point for Major Groups, (New York, 15/10/2007).

<sup>92</sup> Interview with Tonya Vaturi, Programme Associate for Major Groups, Division for Sustainable Development, DESA, (New York, 16/10/2007).

<sup>93</sup> Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development: Prepcom II Summary*, p. 2; Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development: Prepcom III Summary*, p. 9; and Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development: Prepcom IV Summary*, p. 2.

<sup>94</sup> Raustiala, ‘States, NGOs and International Environmental Institutions’, p. 724.

place, and they were running into each other.”<sup>95</sup> The major groups were also given seats for the plenary sessions of the Summit. According to Zeyra Aydin, the UN official managing the major groups’ programme, 90 seats were put aside, ten for each major group, something that had “never happened before in any UN meeting.”<sup>96</sup> This allowed their representatives to speak in debates, and participate in the multi-stakeholder sessions and round-tables.<sup>97</sup> Slots were provided for the major groups to speak to the whole conference at the start and end of the Summit. The order of the speakers was carefully calculated and hierarchical, and it was agreed that

the speakers’ list will be established by drawing lots, in accordance with customary UN protocol, whereby Heads of State and Government will speak first, followed by ministers, and then heads of delegations, and that lower-level delegations and observers may speak in Plenary from Thursday–Friday, 29–30 August.<sup>98</sup>

Together with techniques such as the multi-stakeholder dialogues and round-table sessions, these mechanisms sought to govern participation in the interests of “a serious dialogue between governments and other stakeholders.”<sup>99</sup>

However, even UN facilitators conceded that this dialogue enjoyed “varying levels of success”, with the major groups often having to rely upon the chair to ensure that states actually listened to what they had to say.<sup>100</sup> Access to particular areas and facilities was tightly controlled and security was a paramount concern, as one journalist reported.

Media entry to three of the four major sites had journalists trekking to back alleyways and using service entrances guarded by armed police and looking like post-9/11 airport security with X-ray machinery, dogs, and all. There were more than 150 computer stations and another 200 hook-ups available for media at Sandton, but only 200 seats reserved for print media in the main plenary gallery, some seven floors up from media central, and the elevators were ‘down’ for security reasons. Media pool passes, generally available to those who arrived at 6:30 am, were limited. Photographers and television crews were escorted inside by police officers.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Interview with Zehra Aydin, UN focal point for Major Groups, (New York, 15/10/2007).

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. At Rio NGO access to the main conference floor was limited and carefully regulated. See W. Mwangi, ‘Three Decades of NGO Activism in International Environmental Negotiations: Who Influences NGOs?’, in Kalhauge *et al*, *Global Challenges*, pp. 177 – 178.

<sup>97</sup> Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development: Prepcom I*, 22, 1, p. 1;

<sup>98</sup> Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development: Prepcom IV Summary*, p. 12.

<sup>99</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 118.

<sup>100</sup> Interview with Tonya Vaturi, Programme Associate for Major Groups, Division for Sustainable Development, DESA, (New York, 16/10/2007). See also Bäckstrand, ‘Democratizing Global Environmental Governance?’, p. 485.

<sup>101</sup> Valenti, ‘Commentary’, p. 382.

The participation of non-state actors at the WSSD was therefore channelled and governed in certain ways. Major groups' interaction with the negotiators was conducted by specified representatives and on an issue-by-issue basis. Particular spokespeople were nominated so they could "funnel their ideas through that person."<sup>102</sup> When the CSD NGO steering committee collapsed during the PrepCom phase, the WSSD secretariat appointed three NGOs – the Third World Network, the Danish-92 Group (whose role was later taken over by ANPED, the Northern Alliance for Sustainability) and the Environment Liaison Centre International – to represent NGOs.<sup>103</sup> This prompted protests from some NGOs concerned by the unilateral nature of the decision.<sup>104</sup> Such techniques of management were clearly necessary in light of the WSSD priority on cooperation and consensus; however they work to qualify the official claim that the Johannesburg Summit was a space of free interaction and equal partnership.

The degree of participation granted to accredited groups in Johannesburg, though multi-stakeholder dialogues, speeches in plenary sessions, and the Type II partnerships went further than in most previous conferences.<sup>105</sup> In his pre-Summit briefing, Nitin Desai argued that Johannesburg would be different from Rio because it would recognise civil society organisations "as more than just advocacy groups trying to influence governments but as genuine partners in implementation."<sup>106</sup> Yet frustrations still emerged over the limits to participation at the WSSD.<sup>107</sup> A coalition of Southern social movements claimed that the multi-stakeholder dialogue format

did not seem to have any influence on the outcome of the Summit. It turned out to be an effective way of curbing voices that oppose the current neo-liberal policies, forcing the input of social movements through a consensus mechanism that excludes any expression of our analysis and proposals. Genuine effective input from civil society groups that do not share the neo-liberal positions remain unheard.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Interview with Diane Quarless, Vice Chair and Rapporteur on the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee for the WSSD, and co-Chair of Partnership Initiatives, (New York, 17/10/2007).

<sup>103</sup> Munnik and Wilson, *The World Comes to One Country*, pp. 45 – 46 and 75.

<sup>104</sup> Mwangi, 'Three Decades of NGO Activism in International Environmental Negotiations', p. 178.

<sup>105</sup> Bäckstrand, 'Democratizing Global Environmental Governance?'.  
<sup>106</sup> Burg, 'The World Summit on Sustainable Development', p. 112.

<sup>107</sup> For example, interview with Ines Ceruti, Ceasefire and Earthlife Africa, (Johannesburg, 22/09/2006); A. Chimphango, *Reflections on the WSSD*, (Cape Town; EMG, 2002); S. Law, *Sunday Night in Sandton: An 11<sup>th</sup> hour intervention*, (Cape Town; EMG, 2002).

<sup>108</sup> Statement by Via Campesina, International Farmers Movement, Movimiento Campesino Internacional, Mouvement Paysan International, 'WSSD turns out to be Doha + 10 (months) instead of Rio + 10 (years)', published in *Khanya Journal*, 2, (December 2002), p. 34.

Concerns about the distance of the civil society forum from Sandton, the degree of access that the major groups would have to the intergovernmental process and the amount of time that would be assigned for their statements were raised early in the PrepCom process.<sup>109</sup> One activist pointed out that whilst access was unprecedented, “during the PrepComs there were practically no governments in the room when we gave those interventions”, and therefore there was no way of making sure “there’s an actual impact between what civil society is saying and what the governments are agreeing on.”<sup>110</sup> A coalition of South African NGOs complained that

limited access can only be understood as a deliberate attempt to create competition, conflict and division between civil society actors. It undermines the productive and creative role that civil society played in the 1992 Rio Summit and subsequent conventions. A dangerous precedent has been set.<sup>111</sup>

UN organisers conceded that “after the summit there was frustration, with many major groups feeling that whatever they do their voices will never be heard by governments.”<sup>112</sup>

Security and the capacity of the venues meant that even many accredited participants had to be turned away from some events. “We had a big problem with restricting the flow of the major group representatives who couldn’t even get into the building”, reflected one of the organisers, “we didn’t anticipate so many people turning up and there not being enough space for them. We were giving out raffle tickets, and people could hand them on, and take turns going in and out of the building.”<sup>113</sup> This put the organisers in a difficult position, and it was conceded that

it really created a problem when there were speakers coming in, or important people, we had to try to keep track of who needed to be in the room ... I guess there is certainly a hierarchy, but as the Secretariat we had to be careful, and we always are, not to pick and choose. It’s a self-organising process.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development: Prepcom I*, 22, 1, p. 2; and Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development: Prepcom I*, 22, 2, (Manitoba; International Institute for Sustainable Development, 02/05/2001), p. 2.

<sup>110</sup> Interview with Rebecca Pearl, Women’s Environment and Development Organisation, (New York, 22/10/2007).

<sup>111</sup> SANGOCO *et al*, *South African NGO statement*, (01/09/2002).

<sup>112</sup> Interview with Tonya Vaturi, Programme Associate for Major Groups, Division for Sustainable Development, DESA, (New York, 16/10/2007).

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

These formal and informal hierarchies constituted important techniques for the regulation and management of the Summit, and highlight the degree to which power relationships permeate UN negotiations. Even within and between state delegations power relationships were conditioned by these techniques of government, since the smallest and poorest states found their ability to participate restricted by their “small delegations, limited staff and limited capacity.”<sup>115</sup> The complexity of the process meant that larger, wealthier and more experienced delegations were placed at an advantage. Despite the talk of openness, consultation and participation, negotiations on the texts was conducted, in the last instance, by the representatives of the most powerful states meeting behind closed doors.

For some this demonstrated the sham of the WSSD, and the continued operation of age-old *realpolitik* and back-room diplomacy.<sup>116</sup> However, such techniques of exclusion, marginalisation and facilitation can also be seen as elements of the broader Summit theatre, in which a smooth performance and production of an agreed text was an essential part of legitimating the political *status quo*. Through such techniques, which included sovereign and disciplinary strategies of power, the Summit itself was constituted as a technique of exemplary government, which established certain procedures and standards for the conduct of global sustainable development.

### *Production of subjectivities*

By providing a stage on which sustainable development was performed, the WSSD also governed global politics by producing a particular cast of actors and a global audience. This section shows how the Summit can be seen as a technique of facilitating rule at a distance through the way it established inspirational leaders and cooperative partners, and promoted certain standards of conduct for legitimate political actors.

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<sup>115</sup> Chasek, ‘NGOs and State Capacity in International Environmental Negotiations’, p. 168; see also D. R. Fisher and J. F. Green, ‘Understanding Disenfranchisement: Civil Society and Developing Countries’ Influence and Participation in Global Governance for Sustainable Development’, *Global Environmental Politics*, 4, 3, (2004), pp. 65 – 84.

<sup>116</sup> Chimphango, *Reflections on the WSSD*.

Through the establishment of the Summit as a raised stage with a global field of visibility, the population of the entire world became the potential audience. Delegates were reminded that “the eyes of the world are upon us here, waiting for signs that we are able to bridge our differences.”<sup>117</sup> Mbeki warned that “the peoples of the world expect that this World Summit will live up to its promise.”<sup>118</sup> This global audience was extended to future generations, and the *Political Declaration* recorded that “at the beginning of this Summit, the children of the world spoke to us in a simple yet clear voice that the future belongs to them”, children who “represent our collective future.”<sup>119</sup> When speaking to the 11<sup>th</sup> session of the CSD in 2003, Moosa reminded them that at the WSSD “we entered into a solemn pact with future unborn generations not to destroy beloved planet Earth.”<sup>120</sup> Through these discursive framings an audience for the WSSD was constructed that included all the peoples of the world, now and into the future.

Viewing the performance of the WSSD from a governmentality perspective, this audience was constructed as both the ultimate end of government and its most important means.<sup>121</sup> They were not merely a passive audience, receiving the instructions and dictates of the Summit delegates, but were urged to respond to the example set in Johannesburg, to participate directly in the WSSD itself if they could, and to implement sustainable development according to the model advocated at the Summit. As such the exemplary government of the WSSD constructed each and every member of the global population as responsible for their own self-government for sustainable development.

The cast which participated in the Summit itself were thus placed into a special relationship with this broader audience. Not only were they constructed as essential actors for sustainable development, but they were also expected to be leaders that would inspire the broader audience to participate in sustainable development. Participation itself was increasingly framed as a task for cooperative partners rather

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<sup>117</sup> Opening statement by Klaus Topfer in UN, *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, p. 162.

<sup>118</sup> Statement by Thabo Mbeki, in UN, *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, p. 158.

<sup>119</sup> UN, *The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development*, #3 and 4. See also K. Annan, ‘Only one task remains: implementation’, in Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, pp. 8 – 9.

<sup>120</sup> V. Moosa, *Opening Remarks by the Chairperson of the 11<sup>th</sup> of the UN Commission for Sustainable Development, 28 April to 9 May 2003*, (New York, 2003).

<sup>121</sup> Foucault, ‘Governmentality’; Rose, *Powers of Freedom*.



than sovereign independent actors. Those who were able to play this dual role of inspirational leader and cooperative partner most convincingly were accordingly recognised as the most legitimate and important political actors.

The leading roles in international politics have conventionally been assumed to be played by states and their representatives. Both media and academic discourses of summitry have tended to look automatically to states as the source of political willpower and leadership for sustainable development.<sup>122</sup> State actors were themselves keen to stress their centrality at the Summit, as Zehra Aydin observed.

In the UN it is important for governments always to make sure that you understand that this is an organisation of member states, it doesn't belong to anybody else. NGOs come here because the member states allow it, the Secretariat is paid because the member states pay them. It's all about the membership. And the minute you talk too much about the participation of non-state actors, the governments feel they have to make sure you understand that this is their house, and the rest are guests, allowed in for whatever purpose. And usually the non-state actors are allowed in to contribute to the discussion and help the governments to make informed decisions.<sup>123</sup>

Reflecting this state-centrism, the *Political Declaration* began by declaring: "We, the representatives of the people of the world...", a telling variation on the UN Charter's familiar 'We, the peoples...'.<sup>124</sup> It was a clear assertion that the democratic representatives of sovereign states were the primary actors in Johannesburg. The *Political Declaration* went on to claim that the legitimacy of representative democracy and the international community of states rested on their ability to provide leadership at moments like the WSSD, poetically invoking Biblical verse to argue that

unless we act in a manner that fundamentally changes their lives the poor of the world may lose confidence in their representatives and the democratic systems to which we remain committed, seeing their representatives as nothing more than sounding brass or tinkling cymbals.<sup>125</sup>

In this oft-quoted passage the delegates were positioned as defenders of democracy and their success at the Summit, it was insinuated, was all that stood between democracy and the potentially anti-democratic poor. In this light there are few

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<sup>122</sup> J. Burchell and S. Lightfoot, 'Leading the Way? The European Union at the WSSD', *European Environment*, 14, 6, (2004), pp. 331 – 341; Dalby, 'Reading Rio, writing the world'; and Lightfoot, 'A Good International Citizen?'.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with Zehra Aydin, UN focal point for Major Groups, (New York, 15/10/2007).

<sup>124</sup> UN, *The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development*, #1.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*, #15. I Corinthians 13:1 reads "If I speak in the tongues of men and angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

political moments as powerfully symbolic as the successful resolution of a protracted diplomatic deadlock by a newly arrived head-of-state after just hours of face-to-face negotiations. In one sense, particularly for participating states, the entire system of democratic political representation was secured through such interventions.

This symbolic emphasis upon the primacy of states and their highest representatives was furthered by the ‘Johannesburg Setting’, which involved a group of ministers and other senior government representatives who could take high-level political decisions on issues where the diplomats remained deadlocked.<sup>126</sup> The WSSD allowed heads-of-state to play the glamorous and dramatic role of international statesmen, acting out their sovereignty as the last hope for agreement on sustainable development. Typically, EU President Hans Christian Schmidt claimed that “if the problems cannot be solved at a technical level, we are prepared to solve them at a political level.”<sup>127</sup> It is in this sense that David Reynolds argues that “personalised power is at the heart of summitry”, since summits draw attention to the make-or-break roles of the ‘great men’ of inter-state politics.<sup>128</sup>

In many ways, therefore, the WSSD was an opportunity for states to perform and assert their centrality in global politics. However, as the re-orientation of sustainable development towards multi-stakeholder partnerships has shown, the automatic primacy of state actors in sustainable development was no longer guaranteed. States were expected to be leaders in international politics not just through the negotiation of texts but through the announcement of new initiatives and programmes, perhaps in partnership with diverse other actors. Examples of exemplary leadership demonstrated by states at the WSSD included the announcement by an alliance of like-minded delegations that they were forming a Renewable Energy coalition in order to express their “strong commitment to the promotion of renewable energy.”<sup>129</sup> Expressing their disappointment of the failure of the *Plan of Implementation* to include a binding target for renewable energy, they stated that “we

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<sup>126</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 122. Similarly at the Rio Summit, “the two or three most politically intractable issues were ultimately left for heads of states to resolve during the last 3 days of the conference. Such is summitry diplomacy.” Cléménçon, ‘On the Back Burner Again’, p. 112.

<sup>127</sup> ‘Horse-trading at the Jo’burg Summit’, *Mail and Guardian* (SA), 30/08/2002.

<sup>128</sup> Reynolds, *Summits*, p. 15.

<sup>129</sup> Joint Declaration by Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, The European Union, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, The Alliance Of Small Island States, Switzerland And Turkey, *The Way Forward on Renewable Energy*, delivered to the final Plenary of the WSSD on 04/09/2002.

commit ourselves to cooperate in the further development and promotion of renewable energy technologies”, and that “we have adopted, or will adopt, such targets for the increase of renewable energy and we encourage others to do likewise.”<sup>130</sup> Such initiatives reveal the emergence of new rationalities of government at the WSSD. Rather than relying on multilateral agreements and regulations, new constellations of state and non-state actors used the Summit stage to promote an explicitly exemplary rationality of government, encouraging others to voluntarily follow their example.

The WSSD also broadened the ways in which non-state actors could participate in global governance. Thus for some, the lesson of Johannesburg was that “the failure of national governments to act coherently and assertively” implied that “leadership for sustainability will come from civil society.”<sup>131</sup> The participation of NGOs and other major groups in the WSSD – through multi-stakeholder meetings, informal interactions with delegates, plenary speeches as well as the parallel Global People’s Forum – recognised and built on their role during the 1992 Rio Conference and during the 1990s with the CSD. Peter Willetts has described how “NGOs have changed from being peripheral advisors of secondary status in the diplomatic system to being high status participants at the centre of policymaking.”<sup>132</sup> As Gemmill and Bamidele-Izu have pointed out, their “creativity, flexibility, entrepreneurial nature, and capacity for vision and long-term thinking often set NGOs apart from governmental bodies”, particularly when it came to forming flexible and bilateral partnerships.<sup>133</sup>

Business actors were also well-positioned to play leading roles at the WSSD through partnerships and exemplary initiatives. The UN record of the WSSD noted that “a notable difference between Rio and Johannesburg is the more conspicuous presence of business at the latter.”<sup>134</sup> The 700 business delegates at the WSSD were a

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> D. Hales, ‘The Importance of Johannesburg’, *Network 2002: Preparing for Earth Summit 2002*, 3, 7, (2002), p. 1.

<sup>132</sup> P. Willetts, ‘From “Consultative Arrangements” to “Partnership”’: The Changing Status of NGOs in Diplomacy at the UN’, *Global Governance*, 6, (2000), p. 193. See also C. Alger, ‘The Emerging Roles of NGOs in the UN System: From Article 72 to a People’s Millennium Assembly’, *Global Governance*, 8, (2002), pp. 93 – 117.

<sup>133</sup> B. Gemmill and A. Bamidele-Izu, ‘The Role of NGOs and Civil Society in Global Environmental Governance’, in D. C. Esty and M. Ivanova (eds.), *Global Environmental Governance: Options and Opportunities*, (New Haven; Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, 2002), p. 90.

<sup>134</sup> UN, *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, #52.

well-organised and highly visible group.<sup>135</sup> Advertisements for corporations stressing their social and environmental contributions were prominent, whether it was de Beers billboards announcing “Water is Forever” or the BMW exhibition in Sandton Square.<sup>136</sup> Other high profile commercial sponsors of the Summit included Hewlett-Packard, DaimlerChrysler, Standard Bank, Anglo American, Eskom, Coca-Cola and South African Airways.<sup>137</sup> One industry analyst concluded that “business had a strong and visible focus at the summit which was backed by extensive and expensive preparation and organisation.”<sup>138</sup> One of the most prestigious events of the entire Summit was the Lekgotla Business Day organised by BASD on 1 September.<sup>139</sup> It was US\$100 per head to enter, and Kofi Annan delivered the keynote speech, adding to the “public legitimacy” of business as an important sustainable development actor at the Summit.<sup>140</sup>

The Summit stage was therefore shared in Johannesburg by a multiplicity of actors, including states, major groups and international institutions. Rather than their political legitimacy being judged primarily in terms of democratic representation or accountability, the status of WSSD participants was increasingly also judged in terms of their ability and willingness to provide exemplary leadership and pursue cooperative partnerships for sustainable development. Legitimate political actors were expected to contribute concrete resources, energy and expertise to partnerships for sustainable development, as well as to conduct themselves appropriately, cooperatively and consensually. This stress upon cooperation as the hallmark of responsible conduct was a defining feature of how the WSSD constructed legitimate political actors. At the close of PrepCom I, Emil Salim praised “the smiles and good spirit” which had led to a “constructive and positive atmosphere”, and hoped that a similarly cooperative spirit would continue throughout the negotiations.<sup>141</sup> The eventual agreement in Johannesburg was interpreted as a sign that “significant progress has been made towards achieving a global consensus and partnership among

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<sup>135</sup> Mehta, ‘The Johannesburg Summit from the Depths’, pp. 124 – 126; Thérien and Pouliot, ‘The Global Compact’, p. 59.

<sup>136</sup> Klein, ‘The Summit that couldn’t save itself’.

<sup>137</sup> JOWSCO, *Report of the Economic Impact*, p. 14.

<sup>138</sup> Hoogervorst, WSSD, p. 3.

<sup>139</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 129; Hamann *et al*, ‘Responsibility versus Accountability?’, p. 22.

<sup>140</sup> Rutherford, ‘Talking the Talk’, p. 146.

<sup>141</sup> Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development: Prepcom I Summary*, pp. 1 and 5.

all the people of our planet.”<sup>142</sup> Through the Type II outcomes previously oppositional identities – such as Greenpeace and the WBCSD, for example – were reframed as equal partners with a shared interest in sustainable development. As one UN official reflected, this demonstrated a “newfound camaraderie”, such that

the focus now is on really working together, and that was something everyone agreed upon at the summit, that partnerships are important, that, in order to fulfil these goals and commitments, the entire international community, whoever is the appropriate actor in the situation, they must work together. ... That’s why you don’t see organisations simply coming to rail at the government[s]. It’s not productive any more.<sup>143</sup>

In such ways the WSSD can be regarded as a technique of power which attempted to govern the conduct of international politics by establishing standards of proper behaviour in terms of inspirational leadership and cooperative partnership, and through which the entire global population would ultimately be enrolled in responsible self-conduct and partnership for sustainable development.

### *Two cases of exemplary government at the WSSD*

Two examples of how this exemplary government worked at the Summit are useful to illustrate the evolving role of summits, and the political effects produced. These are the Johannesburg Climate Legacy initiative, and the re-branding of South African national identity as both the ‘negotiating capital of the world’ and as the ‘custodian of sustainable development’. Both these cases show how the WSSD was predicated on governing the conduct of conduct by example.

The Johannesburg Climate Legacy (JCL) initiative demonstrates how the private sector was brought into sustainable development governance during the WSSD. JCL was a Type II partnership between the South African Government, UNDP, IUCN, BASD, WBCSD, the Development Bank of South Africa, a UK company called Future Forests, the US Climate Neutral Network, the International Institute for Energy Conservation and the GEF. It aimed to measure the carbon

<sup>142</sup> UN, *The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development*, #10.

<sup>143</sup> Interview with Tonya Vaturi, Programme Associate for Major Groups, Division for Sustainable Development, DESA, (New York, 16/10/2007).

footprint of the Summit and then off-set it through green projects in South Africa funded by private donations.<sup>144</sup> Aiming to raise US\$5 million in total, during the Summit itself they only raised US\$330,000.<sup>145</sup> More important than the actual sums raised, however, was the way the initiative explicitly invoked an exemplary rationality of government, evidenced in claims that the project “will provide forever a blueprint for the mitigation of the environmental impacts of hosting large international conferences.”<sup>146</sup>

The project deliberately sought to utilise the prominence and visibility of the WSSD in urging business actors to act responsibly by offsetting their carbon footprint for travel to the Summit, and accordingly act as an inspiration to others. Companies were advised that, by doing this on “the world stage”, they could “make one of the most important commitments in modern history to a sustainable future.”<sup>147</sup> The company running the JCL public relations strategy were Future Forests, who describe themselves as “a world leader in turning carbon liability into a brand asset for companies.”<sup>148</sup> They claimed that

JCL is the opportunity to demonstrate in a direct, practical and visible way that specific businesses support carbon responsibility. By delivering a voluntary programme aimed at individuals, JCL has also the potential to pick up the climate change agenda with a mass market and bring about shift change in behaviours and attitudes of peoples around the world. ... [Companies] will benefit from prominent exposure on an international stage in a flagship project of the WSSD, with UN and international government endorsement. ... All corporate sponsors will benefit from the high level of media interest in the WSSD in general and the Johannesburg Climate Legacy (JCL) project specifically, generated by a dedicated media and marketing team at Future Forests, supported by local teams and infrastructure ... Access to a central ‘press office’ for the JCL project, managed by Future Forests ... will provide a central point of contact for international and local media and provide marketing materials, to corporate sponsors as well as media, to ensure maximum return on investment.<sup>149</sup>

Several key aspects of the ways in which the conduct of conduct through example was attempted are evident here. First, the initiative stressed the way in which ‘prominent exposure on an international stage’ was central to the communication of sustainable development. From this perspective the Summit was more important as an advertising opportunity for promoting exemplary projects than it was as a venue for

<sup>144</sup> JCL Partnership, <http://webapps01.un.org/dsd/partnerships/public/partnerships/15.html>

<sup>145</sup> Burg, ‘The World Summit on Sustainable Development’, p. 119.

<sup>146</sup> Future Forests, *Greening the WSSD*, p. 1.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid, p. 1.

multilateral negotiations. Since the WSSD the CSD has hosted a number of “partnership fairs”, which rest on a similar exemplary rationality of government, being designed to enable “partnerships for sustainable development to network, identify partners, create synergies between partnerships and learn from each other’s experiences.”<sup>150</sup>

Secondly, the initiative made it clear that part of the attraction of the project was the way it included the skills and knowledge of public relations and marketing experts, who could turn ‘carbon liability into a brand asset’. The production of knowledge and value out of what was once merely pollution or waste signifies an important political effect of the new regimes of power/knowledge enacted at the WSSD.<sup>151</sup> Moreover, the reliance on branding and advertising strategies demonstrates the centrality of communicative forms of knowledge to exemplary rationalities government.

Thirdly, the initiative firmly positioned responsible businesses as leading actors for sustainable development, indeed businesses were informed that they could ‘make one of the most important commitments in modern history to a sustainable future’. Companies were able to invest in this product without any action to reduce the carbon emissions of their core business. A mining corporation, for example, could purchase credits to reduce its carbon footprint, without changing any aspect of its actual operations. Moreover, beyond merely reducing their own carbon footprint, part of the explicit rationale of the scheme was that by doing so they could bring about ‘change in behaviours and attitudes of peoples around the world’. This was to be achieved not only through a vague hope that the project would promote and encourage the idea of carbon off-setting, but also by developing “three models for extending the Climate Legacy idea worldwide” to future events, entire cities, and forms of transport.<sup>152</sup> IUCN have also applied the Johannesburg model to the ‘greening’ of subsequent events such as the World Conservation Congress in Bangkok in 2004.<sup>153</sup> This encapsulates the rationality of exemplary government, in

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<sup>150</sup> CSD partnership fairs, [http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/partnerships/partnerships\\_fair.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/partnerships/partnerships_fair.htm). Chasek describes the CSD as having become a “trade show”. Interview with Pamela Chasek, Executive Editor Earth Negotiations Bulletin, (New York, 22/10/2007).

<sup>151</sup> Lohmann, *Carbon Trading*.

<sup>152</sup> IIEC Climate Legacy, [http://www.iiec.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=128&Itemid=71](http://www.iiec.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=128&Itemid=71)

<sup>153</sup> The website of the World Conservation Congress states that “the Bangkok Climate Legacy strives to make the 3rd IUCN World Conservation Congress carbon neutral. It builds on IUCN’s leadership in the Johannesburg Climate Legacy (JCL) to offset the greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the

which the conduct of conduct is achieved through the communication of certain examples, rather than the promulgation of regulations, laws, targets or restrictions.

The Johannesburg Climate Legacy was therefore a Type II partnership which shows how sustainable development discourse and the WSSD functioned in practice within formations of advanced liberal government. Premised upon voluntary participation and market approaches to climate change it exemplifies the ways in which sustainable development was re-framed at the WSSD.<sup>154</sup> It also highlights the importance of summits in terms of providing a highly visible marketing and branding opportunity, through which private sector actors could reposition themselves as at the heart of global governance for sustainable development.

Whilst the Johannesburg Climate Legacy is an excellent example of a specific partnership that worked to govern sustainable development through advanced liberal exemplary government, the re-branding of the South African national image at the WSSD shows more broadly how the theatre of the Summit ordered and governed global politics. Through their performance at the WSSD a South African brand was constructed and reinforced as an inspirational leader in both international negotiations and at the forefront of sustainable development. It also shows how the traditional political roles of states have been expanded, transnationalised and modified through their insertion into regimes of exemplary government.

The theatre of the WSSD offered inspirational leaders an opportunity to communicate a message of optimism and reconciliation to the watching audience. No one individual seemed to represent these qualities more than Nelson Mandela, and through his presence the image of South Africa as a 'Rainbow Nation' which had overcome the injustices and divisions of the past was repeatedly invoked. Despite Mandela not being officially involved in the WSSD there was a predictably excitable reaction to his presence, with numerous heads-of-state queuing up for photo

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World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002". IUCN, World Parks Congress 2004, [http://www.iucn.org/congress/2004/about/climate\\_legacy.htm](http://www.iucn.org/congress/2004/about/climate_legacy.htm)

<sup>154</sup> It is also another example of how the WSSD sought to implement sustainable development through specific initiatives and measurable targets, as discussed in chapter three, rather than through structural or political change. Similar intersections of carbon trading, corporate social responsibility and multi-level governance networks can be identified within the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism, which relies on selling carbon credits to private firms and states in order to fund 'green development' projects in the South. See K. Bäckstrand and E. Lövbrand, 'Planting Trees to Mitigate Climate Change: Contested Discourses of Ecological Modernization, Green Governmentality, and Civic Environmentalism', *Global Environmental Politics*, 6, 1, (2006), pp. 50 – 75; Lohmann, *Carbon Trading*; and Oels, 'Rendering Climate Change Governable'.



opportunities and a dose of “Madiba magic.”<sup>155</sup> His presence helped the South African government develop a ‘nation brand’ as an ideal host for international conferences.<sup>156</sup>

Since the mid-1990s South Africa has actively sought a leading and hosting role in international negotiations, seeking to mediate between the North and South and promoting its own version of reconciliation. Major international conferences hosted in the post-Apartheid era include the ninth UN Conference on Trade and Development in 1996, the twelfth Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Durban in 1999, the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerances (WCAR) in Durban in 2001, and the World Parks Congress in Durban in 2003. South Africa also chaired the Commonwealth from 2000 – 2001, and the newly established African Union in 2002. Given that South Africa’s absence from such events was a major feature of their pre-1990 international isolation, it was noted as early as 1999 that hosting summits was becoming “a very visible feature of South African diplomacy.”<sup>157</sup> Summit organisers confirmed that South Africa was actively “trying to build ourselves as a conference destination.”<sup>158</sup> In light of this the smooth hosting of the WSSD was a source of great pride to many South Africans, with one commentator declaring that “South Africa has become a major destination for international dialogue. It has simply become the ‘Negotiating capital of the world’.”<sup>159</sup>

Chasek and Sherman interpreted the decision to hold the WSSD in South Africa as a reflection of “the important contribution the South African government had made in advancing the cause of multilateralism and in contributing to North-South dialogue since its readmission to the UN”, as well as in recognition of South Africa’s domestic achievements since 1994.<sup>160</sup> Instrumental in its formation but absent during most of the Apartheid years, South Africa was the UN’s “prodigal

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<sup>155</sup> ‘Madiba magic to sparkle at the summit’, *Mail and Guardian* (SA), 30/08/2002.

<sup>156</sup> The literature on “nation branding” argues that it involves more than just advertising, sloganeering or tourism marketing. It is about skillfully discovering, packaging and communicating an already existing “national identity”. Thus “nations are *already* de facto brands, regularly projecting their assets, attributes and liabilities to a public at large, whether intentionally or not.” Aronczyk, ‘Living the Brand’, p. 49.

<sup>157</sup> M. Muller, ‘The Diplomacy of Reintegration: South Africa Back into the Fold’, in J. Melissen (ed.), *Innovations in Diplomatic Practice*, (Basingstoke; Macmillan, 1999), p. 71. They also hosted the Rugby and Cricket World Cups in 1994 and 1999, contributing to their high international profile.

<sup>158</sup> Interview with Chippy Olver, Director General of DEAT and chairman of JOWSCO, (Johannesburg, 05/10/2006).

<sup>159</sup> B. Bam, ‘Preface’, in Civil Society Secretariat, *A Sustainable World is Possible*, p. 4.

<sup>160</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 50.

child” and the WSSD was a key moment in a process of re-integration into the UN that culminated in 2007 with their election to a temporary seat on the Security Council.<sup>161</sup> South Africa’s renunciation of nuclear weapons and their leadership during the 1995 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) extension negotiations further contributed to their high moral standing in international society.<sup>162</sup> In this sense Chasek described the WSSD as South Africa’s “coming of age ceremony”, and for Mbeki “the success of the WSSD “showed the peoples of the world what we were doing with our freedom, for which they too had struggled and sacrificed.”<sup>163</sup> In his State of the Nation address in 2000, Mbeki declared that, “having ended our dark days as a pariah country, we can rightly say that, today, the nations of our common universe are confident that out of South Africa will emerge a thing of value that will contribute to the building of a more humane world.”<sup>164</sup> As such the WSSD was an important element of Mbeki’s vision of South Africa at the forefront of an ‘African Renaissance’ in global politics.<sup>165</sup>

South African politicians played an active role before, during and after the WSSD to ensure its diplomatic success. In particular, pressure was applied after the Bali PrepCom in support of the draft *Plan of Implementation*, and to try to persuade heads-of-state to attend the Summit.<sup>166</sup> At a handover meeting held in Rio in June 2002 Mbeki ended his speech with a public promise that “failure in Johannesburg was not an option.”<sup>167</sup> During the Summit negotiations themselves there was substantial pressure applied and many hours of facilitation by leading government figures

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<sup>161</sup> Munnik and Wilson, *The World Comes to One Country*, p. 19.

<sup>162</sup> Deitelhoff and Mueller argue that “in the case of the NPT, South Africa held the triple aura of the post-Apartheid regime, the charismatic Nelson Mandela and, most important, the first state ever to have eliminated its nuclear weapons. Without South Africa, the gap between nuclear weapon states and the non-aligned during the 1995 NPT extension negotiations would not have been bridged. Only that country could propose a compromise that would have been rejected as too far-reaching by the nuclear weapon states, and as too little by the non-aligned, if suggested by anybody else.” N. Deitelhoff and H. Mueller, ‘Theoretical paradise – empirically lost? Arguing with Habermas’, *Review of International Studies*, 31, 1, (2005), p. 175. Thanks to Tristan Price for supplying this reference.

<sup>163</sup> Interview with Pamela Chasek, Executive Editor Earth Negotiations Bulletin, (New York, 22/10/2007); Mbeki, ‘South Africa Can Take Pride in World Summit’.

<sup>164</sup> T. Mbeki, *The State Of The Nation Address Of The President Of South Africa*, National Assembly Chamber, Cape Town, South Africa, (04/02/2000).

<sup>165</sup> Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development: Prepcom I Summary*, p. 7; Vale and Maseko, ‘South Africa and the African Renaissance’.

<sup>166</sup> Interview with Chippy Olver, Director General of DEAT and chairman of JOWSCO, (Johannesburg, 05/10/2006); Schroeder, *Rio to Jo’burg and Beyond*; and Turok, ‘Battle for the WSSD’.

<sup>167</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 89.

including Moosa, Olver and Foreign Minister Dlamini-Zuma.<sup>168</sup> On one occasion, right at the end of the WSSD when the paragraph on energy was one of the few sections still outstanding, Moosa apparently “pleaded with delegations to accept the revised text intact.”<sup>169</sup> Such personal efforts demonstrate the degree to which many South Africans believed that “the onus of ensuring the successful outcome of the WSSD rests largely on the shoulders of the South African government”, who accordingly felt a keen sense of responsibility as “brokers.”<sup>170</sup>

The smooth running of the WSSD was crucial to the re-branding of South African identity, and they sought “to demonstrate unequivocally that Johannesburg has the ability to host major international gatherings, and to create positive impressions of the city, the province, the country and continent.”<sup>171</sup> The welcoming ceremony was a theatrical spectacular, involving a “one-and-a-half hour show depicting the birth of the planet and set on a multi-tiered stage in the shape of the continent.”<sup>172</sup> Gauteng police commissioner Perumal Naidoo confirmed that “we aim to change misperceptions about safety and security in South Africa in general and in Gauteng in particular and hope that our efforts will help to attract the attention of foreign tourists and investors.”<sup>173</sup> Despite the Summit’s budget overspend Olver reported in the aftermath that “the benefits of the WSSD to the country’s image were much better than could have been achieved by spending the same money on marketing.”<sup>174</sup>

The conclusion of the Summit with agreement on the texts therefore confirmed the growing South African brand as successful international negotiators.<sup>175</sup> This drew upon the belief that South Africans have unique and valuable lessons to

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid, pp. 100 and 111; Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development: Prepcom IV Summary*, p. 9; interview with Chippy Olver, Director General of DEAT and chairman of JOWSCO, (Johannesburg, 05/10/2006); and Turok, ‘Battle for the WSSD’.

<sup>169</sup> Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *World Summit on Sustainable Development*, 22, 49, (Manitoba; International Institute for Sustainable Development, 03/09/2002), p. 3.

<sup>170</sup> Schroeder, *Rio to Jo’burg and Beyond*, p. 36; interview with Alf Wills, Deputy-Director General of DEAT, (Pretoria, 26/09/2006).

<sup>171</sup> JOWSCO, *Annual Report 2001-2002*, p. 4.

<sup>172</sup> ‘SA welcomes world in spectacular fashion’, *News 24* (SA).

<sup>173</sup> ‘Security beefed up for WSSD’, *News 24* (SA), 07/08/2002.

<sup>174</sup> ‘World Summit overspend budget by “modest” R188m’, *Mail and Guardian* (SA).

<sup>175</sup> The relief felt by the organisers at the successful conclusion of the WSSD was clear, and was especially pronounced when compared to the disastrous outcome of the World Conference against Racism (WCAR) in 2001 when negotiations had been fractious and no consensus text had emerged. In the run-up to the WSSD one commentator had warned that “the worst-case scenario is the failure of the WSSD to reach an outcome reflecting consensus among all participants, as for example happened at WCAR in Durban in 2001.” Schroeder, *Rio to Jo’burg and Beyond*, p. 38.

teach the international community about peaceful negotiations and reconciliation. The motif of the South African transition pervaded statements on the WSSD. Speeches by Nitin Desai and Klaus Topfer during the opening session both closely linked the task before them with the memory of the South African struggle. According to Topfer,

the World Summit on Sustainable Development in the city of Johannesburg represents a defining moment in the efforts of the international community to put our planet on a sustainable path for the future. It is a defining moment for many reasons, but above all, as we were earlier reminded, 10 years ago, when we met in Rio to embark on our journey as an international community on the path of sustainable development, South Africa was not among us. At that time the vision of a free South Africa was still a dream. Ten years later, we are meeting to chart a new course under the leadership of a freely elected South African President, in this great country that has emerged as a strong and vibrant member of the international community. Mr. President, you have called the victory over apartheid and the emergence of a free, democratic and inclusive South Africa a 'triumph of the human spirit', and indeed it is. ... South Africa realised its dream of freedom. We must realise the dream of environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable development, of responsible prosperity for all.<sup>176</sup>

This framing of the South African experience and their particular national character was widely evident. A collective statement by South African NGOs during the Summit noted their country's "unique experience and skill in managing our complex and continuous political transformation", and asserted that "South Africa is chairing the WSSD because, as people, we defeated apartheid."<sup>177</sup> One NGO director observed that "the recent South African experience is rich with innovative and creative facilitation techniques for solving conflict."<sup>178</sup> Another commentator noted that "South Africa has indeed exported negotiation to the world and sold it as a viable means of addressing human concerns and challenges. It is therefore not surprising that global conferences of such magnitude are often held in South Africa."<sup>179</sup> By performing this history of reconciliation on the stage of the WSSD, the South African national brand acted as an example to the rest of the world of how peaceful multilateral negotiations could be conducted. Yet, such a construction of South African history ignores much of the pain and violence of the transition, as well as over-stating the degree to which South Africa is now peaceful and reconciled. Within this rose-tinted vision of South African history, Summit organisers could make claims

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<sup>176</sup> Statement by Klaus Topfer in UN, *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, pp. 162 – 163.

<sup>177</sup> SANGOCO *et al*, *South African NGO statement*. For a similar assessment, see Munnik and Wilson, *The World Comes to One Country*, p. 19.

<sup>178</sup> S. Law, *Summit of Missed Opportunities*, (Cape Town; EMG, 2002).

<sup>179</sup> Bam, 'Preface', p. 4.

such as that “South Africa has had a history of quite constructively managing mass protest”, an assertion which ignores a parallel and much longer history of violent clashes and police brutality.<sup>180</sup>

The second aspect of the South African re-branding at the WSSD was as inspirational leaders at the forefront of implementing sustainable development. In June 2002 a ceremony was held in Brazil in which the torch of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit was passed to the South African Government.<sup>181</sup> This was associated with the symbolic transfer of the Rio legacy on environment and development. As Mbeki explained to the South African Parliament in the Summit aftermath,

as a host country the successful outcome of the Johannesburg World Summit places a special responsibility on us to be – in our own habits and practices – among the global leaders in sustainable development. Just as South Africa provided the leadership required of it at the Summit and ... hosted with widely acclaimed success the biggest-ever multilateral event, so too must South Africa serve as a shining example in putting into action the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.<sup>182</sup>

For some observers, the Summit raised the profile of sustainable development in South Africa to the degree that “it changed the way government worked.”<sup>183</sup> An inter-ministerial cabinet committee on sustainable development was set-up, and South African leadership within the CSD has been prominent since the Summit.<sup>184</sup> In the words of a prominent South African businessman the WSSD “was very powerful ... it put us on the global map. I think it made us the custodian of sustainable development in some way, for the next five or ten years.”<sup>185</sup>

As ‘custodians of sustainable development’ the South Africans used the WSSD to showcase a range of sustainability initiatives and projects in the country, including the ‘Greening the Summit’ initiative which aimed to reduce the ecological footprint of the event and was “pioneering the way international events will be organised.”<sup>186</sup> The Johannesburg Climate Legacy partnership was a flagship project in this initiative, but there were also social regeneration projects, inner-city clean-ups

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<sup>180</sup> Interview with Chippy Olver, Director General of DEAT and chairman of JOWSCO, (Johannesburg, 05/10/2006).

<sup>181</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 89.

<sup>182</sup> T. Mbeki, ‘Response to Questions in the National Assembly of Parliament,’ Cape Town, 19/09/2002, quoted in Bond, *Talk Left, Walk Right*, p. 14.

<sup>183</sup> Interview with Richard Sherman, IISD, (Cape Town, 10/11/2006).

<sup>184</sup> Ibid; telephone interview with Jessica Wilson, EMG, (11/12/2006).

<sup>185</sup> Interview with Andre Fourie, CEO of the National Business Initiative, (Johannesburg, 24/10/2006).

<sup>186</sup> UNDP, *Greening the WSSD: Leaving a Greening Legacy*, (undated), p. 2; interview with Zarina Patel, academic and ‘Greening the Summit’ project manager at WSSD, (Johannesburg, 12/09/2006).

and injections of money into the transport and infrastructure of the northern suburbs.<sup>187</sup> A “Zero Waste” programme sought to reduce the waste produced by the event and recycle as much as possible.<sup>188</sup>

The impact of such schemes on the broader ecological footprint of the WSSD was relatively slight, especially since, as one post-WSSD study pointed out, “the bulk of the impact stems from international air travel” and “in the bigger global and metropolitan picture of resource consumption and waste generation, the impact of the WSSD was minimal.”<sup>189</sup> However, such initiatives are another indication of the rationality of exemplary government since, as well as their immediate and direct impact, they were intended to be copied and imitated far beyond Johannesburg. As one review of the ‘Greening the Summit’ initiatives pointed out, these programmes “were marketed at the WSSD ... to the world as examples of environmental best practice projects.”<sup>190</sup> The UNDP’s promotional booklet noted that participants at the Summit would “be inspired by the number of ordinary South Africans who are striving towards sustainable development.”<sup>191</sup> Such an outlook confirms the prevailing wisdom of national brand managers, who stress that “primary responsibility for the success of the nation brand lies with individuals”, whose “key function is to ‘live the brand’ – that is, to perform attitudes and behaviours that are compatible with the brand strategy.”<sup>192</sup>

South Africa’s role as an inspirational leader for sustainable development was not therefore based on their ability to enforce stricter environmental and social regulations, or drive international negotiations towards stronger and more binding conventions. Rather South Africa was an ‘exemplary centre’ whose conduct would serve as a shining example to others. Both the ways in which South Africa advertised its brand as ‘negotiating capital of the world’ and as ‘custodians of sustainable

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<sup>187</sup> ‘Business is Brisk at Summit’, *News 24* (SA), 03/09/2002; Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 30; JOWSCO, *Report of the Economic Impact*, pp. 9 – 12; Patel, ‘Understanding Environmental Change in South African Cities’, pp. 30 – 40; ‘SA hotels eye Earth summit boom’, *News 24* (SA), 27/06/2002.

<sup>188</sup> R. Kete, ‘Consumption Barometer – Measuring Talk and Reality at the Summit’, *Science in Africa*, (August 2002); interview with Muna Lakhani, Earthlife Africa and ‘Zero Waste’ co-ordinator, (Durban, 14/12/2006); and Zero Waste Team, *Draft Zero Waste Training and Information Manual for WSSD 2002*, (Johannesburg; Earthlife Africa and the Global Alliance for Incineration Alternatives, June 2002).

<sup>189</sup> P. T. Govender, *Assessment of the Ecological Footprint of the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, unpublished MA thesis, (UKZN, October 2004), pp. 67 and 71.

<sup>190</sup> Patel, ‘Understanding Environmental Change in South African Cities’, pp. 31 – 32.

<sup>191</sup> UNDP, *Greening the WSSD*.

<sup>192</sup> Aronczyk, ‘Living the Brand’, p. 54.

development' rested upon the power of leadership by example, rather than the power of enforcing and obeying. Their re-branded dual role as an inspirational power was succinctly articulated by one of the South African organisers who reflected that "South Africa is the one place there is hope that sustainable development is possible. ... maybe Mandela walks into the room and everything changes."<sup>193</sup>

## *Conclusion*

This chapter has shown how the WSSD can be regarded as a piece of grand political theatre which acted as an "exemplary centre" in governing broader global politics.<sup>194</sup> It acted as a model for international negotiations, demonstrating that states, international institutions and major groups could come together and to agree on the future implementation of sustainable development. As such, it established a certain way of doing international politics and instead of eroding the importance of international summits it demonstrated the importance of exemplary and inspirational stages on which to communicate and govern sustainable development at a distance.

This rationality of exemplary government depended on the establishment of certain fields of visibility, regimes of knowledge, assemblages of techniques and particular identities and subjectivities. By establishing the Summit as somehow 'above' the normal run of politics not only was the entire global community made visible, but so was the WSSD itself constructed as a visible stage, towards which the eyes of the world were directed. The communication of the Summit events and the actions of its participants was enabled through forms of knowledge such as public relations, media strategies and branding. Advertising was important at the WSSD to a degree unprecedented at a UN conference. Participation in the Summit itself was, whilst more open than ever, both governed and managed by particular techniques, technologies and routines. Hierarchies between participants were established and policed, and certain qualities were required for accreditation to the conference centre. Access was granted and restricted to negotiating rooms in accordance with the need to produce a consensus on the text. Yet the particular roles on which the exemplary

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<sup>193</sup> Interview with JP Louw, stakeholder relations in JOWSCO, (Midrand, 17/10/2006).

<sup>194</sup> Geertz, *Negara*, p. 13.

government of the Summit depended – those of the inspirational leader and cooperative partner – enabled non-state actors to share the Summit stage with states to an unprecedented degree.

The exemplary government of the Summit can be seen in detail through specific initiatives such as the Johannesburg Climate Legacy, which enabled the private sector to play a central role in sustainable development governance. The South African government also took advantage of the Summit stage to perform their ‘brand’ as the negotiating capital of the world and as custodians of sustainable development. These roles were predicated not upon their power or authority to dictate or coerce other political actors, but rather upon the example they set and the responsible conduct they demonstrated. The empowerment of new actors and coalitions and the valorisation of new forms of knowledge in the implementation of sustainable development constitute the primary political effects of the WSSD theatre.

The exemplary government of the Johannesburg Summit was an integral part of the broader construction of sustainable development as a form of advanced liberal governmentality, relying upon the responsible self-government of voluntary partners. Both presupposed the freedom and voluntarism of their objects of government, and both were predicated on a conception of the broader population as both the object and subject of government. In fact, the partnership model of sustainable development depends upon high profile moments like the WSSD where specific partnerships could be communicated and advertised as examples to follow. This suggests an evolving role for UN summits. Rather than acting primarily as institutional mechanisms for reconciling state interests and agreeing on new instruments of global governance, increasingly they function as advertising and branding sites through which the conduct of conduct is conveyed.



## Chapter Five

# Resisting Sustainable Development:

## The Politics of Protest at the WSSD

*There is nothing as vulnerable as a mass of people on the street, staring down the risk that state power may be unleashed against them ... and nothing as powerful.*

**Munnik and Wilson, 2003<sup>1</sup>**

### *Introduction*

Saturday 31 August 2002 was hot, sunny and tense in Johannesburg. On this day, midway through the WSSD, protestors marched from Alexandra Township to the Sandton Convention Centre to bring their grievances to the Summit.<sup>2</sup> Rather than one march, however, there were two, and both claimed to represent ‘civil society’. Amid threats of police action and allegations of state brutality, the theatre of the Summit was temporarily preoccupied with confrontation rather than consensus. The protests against ‘the WSSD’ are often ignored and yet they offer important insights into the ways in which dominant forms of government are resisted, disrupted and paradoxically sometimes reinforced. They also revealed the tensions within sustainable development which the Summit discourses of consensus and partnership had partially obscured.

The protests were significant not least because of their size and the degree to which they unsettled the South African political landscape. The official civil society march led by the African National Congress (ANC) and their Alliance partners, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), numbered less than 5,000, whilst the more confrontational social movements mobilised almost 25,000.<sup>3</sup> They

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<sup>1</sup> Munnik and Wilson, *The World Comes to One Country*, p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix B, image #4.

<sup>3</sup> As with any large march estimates of numbers vary considerably, but the orders of magnitude are relatively undisputed. For a range of figures see ‘10,000 March Against Wealth Divide’, *CNN* (US),

formed the largest and “most militantly anti-government march since 1994”, and enthusiastic commentators proclaimed that on that day “the map of the South African political landscape was fundamentally transformed.”<sup>4</sup> Others have interpreted the marches as “a battle for control of South Africa’s revolutionary tradition”, the outcome of which suggested a “new era” in South African politics.<sup>5</sup>

For many of those involved, the marches were a defiant statement of resistance against the South African state, the UN and the WSSD. However, by adopting a Foucauldian governmentality perspective, these straightforward alignments of power and resistance are destabilised. By considering them as “counter-conducts” – assertions of “the will not to be governed thusly” – rather than pure forms of revolutionary resistance it is possible to see how they both subverted and reinforced dominant forms of government.<sup>6</sup> The forms of resistance and representation adopted by the protestors often explicitly contested the means, scope and ends of the advanced liberal rationality of government of the WSSD, yet they also relied upon the theatrical stage of the Summit. By using the WSSD as a platform to contest official discourses of consensus and partnership the protestors provoked marginalisation, condemnation, vilification and even repression, with the result that often their very status as legitimate political actors was cast into doubt.

### ***Contesting consensus at the WSSD***

The marches on 31 August were the most visible and high-profile protests amidst a number of other flashpoints during the WSSD, in a period of such broader

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31/08/2002; S. Brummer, ‘A new war for the allegiance of the poor’, *Mail & Guardian* (SA), 6-12/09/2002; C. Hooper-Box *et al*, ‘Victory for peaceful protest as marches go smoothly’, *The Sunday Independent* (SA), 01/09/2002; ‘Introduction’, Civil Society Secretariat, *A Sustainable World is Possible*, p. 8; R. Rohan, ‘Invasion of the would-be wealth-snatchers’, *The Star* (SA), 02/09/2002; SMI Press Release, 01/09/2002; L. Venter, ‘Summit marchers attack government’, *The Citizen* (SA), 02/09/2002.

<sup>4</sup> P. Bond, *Geopolitics of Jo’burg Protests: Independent Left beats Ruling Party*, (Durban; Centre for Civil Society, 2002); and J. Appolis, ‘The Political Significance of August 31’, *Khanya Journal*, 2, (2002), p. 7. See also L. Gentle, ‘Social Movements in South Africa: Challenges to organised labour and opportunities for renewal’, *South African Labour Bulletin*, 26, 5, (2002), pp. 16 – 19.

<sup>5</sup> R. Malan, ‘New Reds Challenge ANC and Win Skirmish’, *Focus*, 27, (2002).

<sup>6</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 201; and Foucault, ‘What is Critique’, p. 75.

tension that commentators proclaimed “an undeclared state of emergency.”<sup>7</sup> The clashes at the WSSD intersected with tensions over the economic policies of the ANC government, in particular the shift from the ‘Reconstruction and Development Plan’ (RDP) to the more overtly neo-liberal ‘Growth, Employment and Re-distribution’ (GEAR) programme in 1996.<sup>8</sup> Coinciding with the transition in the Presidency from Nelson Mandela to Thabo Mbeki and the end of the ANC’s “political honeymoon”, GEAR’s policies of cost-recovery and the privatisation of basic services have caused tension within the ruling Alliance as well as among local communities and social movements.<sup>9</sup>

The WSSD took place after a turbulent and fractious preparatory process in which a number of groups had clashed over the form of civil society representation.<sup>10</sup> Meetings of the Civil Society Secretariat were dominated by disagreements over structure, financial irregularities and clashing personalities.<sup>11</sup> Tensions between radical social movements, NGOs, and more established organisations such as COSATU resulted in a number of social movements leaving the formal preparatory process and forming the Social Movements Indaba (SMI), declaring itself “opposed to the hoax of the WSSD.”<sup>12</sup> The official Civil Society Secretariat, chaired by COSATU’s Bheki Ntshalintshali, proceeded to organise the Global People’s Forum and eventually marched with the ANC on 31 August, whilst the SMI concentrated

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<sup>7</sup> S. Vally, ‘The Political Economy of State Repression in South Africa’, in S. K. Ndung’u (ed.), *The Right to Dissent: Freedom of Expression, Assembly and Demonstration in South Africa*, (Johannesburg; Freedom of Expression Institute, 2003), p. 62; C. Molele, ‘Pahad sent packing’, *The Sowetan Sunday World* (SA), 01/09/2002.

<sup>8</sup> A. Desai, ‘Neoliberalism and Resistance in South Africa’, *Monthly Review*, 54, 8, (2003), pp. 1 – 11; A. Habib, ‘State-Civil Society Relations in post-Apartheid South Africa’, in J. Daniel, A. Habib and R. Southall (eds.), *State of the Nation 2003-2004*, (Cape Town; HSRC Press, 2003), p. 236.

<sup>9</sup> R. Ballard, A. Habib, I. Valodia and E. Zuern, ‘Introduction: From Anti-Apartheid to Post-Apartheid Social Movements’, in Ballard *et al*, *Voices of Protest*, p. 2; Desai, *We Are The Poors*; Gibson, *Challenging Hegemony*; V. Padayachee (ed.), *The Development Decade: Economic and Social Change in South Africa, 1994-2004*, (Cape Town; HSRC Press, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> COSATU, the SA Council of Churches, South African Youth Council, Disability Sector and SANCO, *Statement on Civil Society Participation in the WSSD*, (17/01/2002); ‘Minutes of Workshop: SA Interim NGO Earth Summit 2002 Caucus’, Johannesburg 7-8 December 2000 (unpublished); and ‘Minutes of Workshop: World Summit on Sustainable Development’, Kempton Park, 5-6 February 2001, (unpublished).

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Bryan Ashe, Earthlife Africa (Durban, 18/12/2006); Hamann *et al*, ‘Competing Visions and Conflicting Priorities’, p. 17; Munnik and Wilson, *The World Comes to One Country*, p. 29; ‘Top WSSD official suspended’, *News 24* (SA), 14/03/2002; interview with Richard Worthington, Earthlife Africa, (Johannesburg, 31/10/2006).

<sup>12</sup> Editorial, ‘Is there a power struggle going on between NGOs and labour?’, *South African Labour Bulletin*, 26, 4, (2002), p. 17; Munnik and Wilson, *The World Comes to One Country*, p. 31; J. Petras and H. Veltmeyer, ‘NGOs in the service of whom?’, *South African Labour Bulletin*, 26, 4, (2002), pp. 23 – 25. *Indaba* is Zulu for meeting or council.

instead on a series of events on the fringes of Nasrec, the landless people's camp at Shareworld, and the environmental justice summit at Shaft 17.<sup>13</sup>

Tensions between these groups erupted at the WSSD, and media discourses of conflict fuelled the confrontational atmosphere. Headlines were militaristic and violent: "Battle Lines Drawn at Jo'burg Summit"; "A new war for the allegiance of the poor"; "Summit marchers attack government"; "Invasion of the would-be wealth-snatchers"; and "Militant siege of summit feared."<sup>14</sup> The SMI was reported as firing "the first public salvo in its war on the World Summit on Sustainable Development ... and warned it was mobilising for a frontal assault."<sup>15</sup> In this atmosphere security concerns were heightened, and the Johannesburg authorities adopted a "zero tolerance" policing strategy, meaning that street vendors, hawkers and the homeless were swept out of the city.<sup>16</sup> Social movement activists alleged that squatters were being dumped "miles from Johannesburg to hide poverty from summit delegates."<sup>17</sup> According to Naomi Klein, "vendors and beggars have been swept from the streets, residents of squatter camps have been evicted", and the Sandton precinct was transformed into a "military complex" with remote spy planes and a 1.8 kilometre "struggle pen" for authorised protests.<sup>18</sup>

Protesting at the WSSD was therefore fraught and dangerous. When activists and academics from the International Forum on Globalisation organised a candlelit march from the University of the Witwatersrand on 24 August in support of freedom of expression, they were blocked by riot police who fired stun grenades into the march, injuring several protestors.<sup>19</sup> Whilst the mass marches on 31 August passed peacefully, activists recounted how they "were surrounded by police vans, cars, armoured vehicles. Helicopters circled overhead, reminding many of us of the days of anti-

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with Bryan Ashe, Earthlife Africa (Durban, 18/12/2006); Civil Society Indaba, *CS Indaba walks out of WSSD NGO Forum*, press release, (19/03/2002); interview with Bheki Ntshalintshali, Deputy General Secretary COSATU, (Johannesburg, 04/10/2006).

<sup>14</sup> 'Battle Lines Drawn at Jo'burg Summit', *Mail & Guardian* (SA); Brummer, 'A new war for the allegiance of the poor', *Mail & Guardian* (SA); Venter, 'Summit marchers attack government', *The Citizen* (SA); Rohan, 'Invasion of the would-be wealth-snatchers', *The Star* (SA); 'Militant siege of summit feared', *The Citizen* (SA), 28/08/2002.

<sup>15</sup> "'We'll Take Sandton'", *Mail & Guardian* (SA), 15/08/2002.

<sup>16</sup> Vally, 'The Political Economy of State Repression in South Africa', p. 68; 'Battle Lines Drawn at Jo'burg Summit', *Mail & Guardian* (SA); interview with Teboho Mashota, APF Finance Administrator and SECC media liaison, (Johannesburg, 18/10/2006).

<sup>17</sup> S. Duguid, 'ANC "behaving like Nat regime"', *Mail & Guardian* (SA), 23-29/08/2002.

<sup>18</sup> N. Klein, 'Booby Traps at Rio+10', *The Nation* (US), 16/09/2002.

<sup>19</sup> APF, *Arresting Dissent: Protesting the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, Video – Independent Media Centre, (2002); Bond, *Talk Left, Walk Right*, p. 109; interview with Dale McKinley, SMI Press Secretary, (Johannesburg, 23/10/2006).

apartheid struggle.”<sup>20</sup> On 2 September police and security guards clashed with pro-Palestinian demonstrators outside the Wits Education Campus over a scheduled speech by Shimon Peres, resulting in rubber bullets being fired by police injuring a number of activists.<sup>21</sup> During the WSSD there were also protests in Sandton against pollution from steel refineries in the Vaal Triangle, and in Durban against pollution from oil refineries.<sup>22</sup> Greenpeace International followed up a confrontation with Indonesian police during PrepCom IV in Bali by hanging a banner from one of the cooling towers at the Koeburg power station near Cape Town to protest against the only nuclear power plant in Africa.<sup>23</sup> Countless other smaller protests occurred during the WSSD, including walk-outs from the Sandton Conference Centre, angry speeches in the Global People’s Forum, and innumerable placards and banners.

These various incidents could be interpreted within a framework which sees civil society as the source of resistance against the state. The SMI, for example, asserted that “on the 31 August 2002 the map of the South African political landscape was fundamentally transformed. A new mass movement came into existence.”<sup>24</sup> Yet this Manichean view of politics does not capture many of the nuances and inconsistencies the protests threw-up, or how they intersected with forms of advanced liberal government. The following sections show how the rationalities of resistance adopted by protestors both subverted and reinforced dominant forms of government.

### *Fields of visibility*

Mainstream discourses established the WSSD as a superior stage from which the entire globe was visible, and on which the representatives of the people of the

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<sup>20</sup> Munnik and Wilson, *The World Comes to One Country*, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> D. McKinley, ‘Trying to “Kill” the Messenger, and Failing: Experiences of the Anti-Privatisation Forum during the WSSD’, in Ndung’u, *The Right to Dissent*, pp. 99 – 100; SMI, Press Release 02/09/2002; ‘Israeli Forces Take Over Wits’, *Mail & Guardian* (SA), 06-12/09/2002; interview with Ahmed Veriava, SMI and Freedom of Expression Institute, (Durban, 02/12/2006).

<sup>22</sup> Groundwork, *Quarterly Newsletter*, 4, 3, (September 2002); interview with Victor Munnik, activist and author, (Johannesburg, 25/10/2006); interview with Des D’Sa, Chairman of the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, (Durban, 15/12/2006).

<sup>23</sup> Munnik and Wilson, *The World Comes to One Country*, p. 62; ‘Clashes at Earth Summit Protest’, *CNN* (US), 25/08/2002; appendix B, image #5.

<sup>24</sup> M. Hlatshwayo, *Secretary’s Report*, presented at the Social Movements Indaba 2006, 2-6 December 2006, UKZN, Durban.

world could meet to agree on a new and better planetary future. This assertion of verticality and superiority implied that the Summit was above political divisions and conflicts. In contrast, protestors at the Summit sought to disrupt and question this construction by revealing how dominant forms of sustainable development actually represented partial and inherently political interests. Whereas the partnership approach was predicated upon highlighting the best examples of cooperative initiatives and sustainable practices, the protestors sought to make visible the unsustainable consequences of development-as-usual. For Naomi Klein this represented “the iconic act of resistance in an unsustainable world: refusing to disappear.”<sup>25</sup>

This rationale of making visible the consequences of unsustainable development was behind the idea of marching from Alexandra Township on 31 August. The route was chosen to highlight the appalling conditions in which many South Africans still live, and to emphasise the difference between these conditions and the wealthy environs of Sandton where Summit delegates spent most of their time during the WSSD.<sup>26</sup> This was explicitly communicated in an SMI press release.

Alexandra represents a microcosm of everything that is wrong with the WSSD. The massive unemployment, lack of essential services, housing evictions, water and electricity cut-offs, environmental degradation, and generalised poverty that is present-day Alexandra sits cheek-by-jowl with the hideous wealth and extravagance of Sandton where the WSSD is taking place. While the fat cat bureaucrats and politicians will be hiding themselves away in luxurious Sandton and spewing out meaningless rhetoric and resolutions about the poor and sustainable development, the people of nearby Alexandra continue to live in dire poverty and to wage a daily struggle for survival. The tragic irony could not be more apparent. Here is an opportunity for local and international press to break out of the hypocritical shell that is the WSSD and to see, hear and report on the realities, not the myths, of ‘development’ in South Africa.<sup>27</sup>

For Trevor Ngwane, a leading social movement activist, “Sandton is a heaven on earth, and Alexandra is something very close to hell.”<sup>28</sup> One marcher told an international journalist that “if the international community wants to understand why we will be marching, they are welcome to come and see us. We will show them how we live and perhaps they will understand.”<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Klein, ‘The Summit that couldn’t save itself’, *The Guardian* (UK).

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Dale McKinley, SMI Press Secretary, (Johannesburg, 23/10/2006); interview with Bheki Ntshalintshali, Deputy General Secretary COSATU, (Johannesburg, 04/10/2006).

<sup>27</sup> SMI, Press Release, 25/08/2002.

<sup>28</sup> APF, *Arresting Dissent*.

<sup>29</sup> J. Vidal, ‘Landless and homeless give voice in the streets’, *The Guardian* (UK), 28/08/2002.

In contrast to the poverty of Alexandra, the protestors drew attention to the fact that most of the economic benefits of the WSSD went to the hotels, restaurants and infrastructure of the well-off northern suburbs close to the official conference.<sup>30</sup> As the official Summit history reported, “in the biggest-ever one-off capital injection in the host city’s northern suburbs, the City of Johannesburg spent tens of millions of rand on road upgrades, road resurfacing, traffic signal upgrades and better signage prior to the Summit.”<sup>31</sup> Very little of the wealth and investment generated by the Summit was felt in Johannesburg’s poorest districts. When attention was paid to the inner city, it was to clear hawkers and taxi drivers from the streets, “so no-one can see them.”<sup>32</sup>

Protest at the WSSD thus sought to make visible the effects of unsustainable development, through publications such as *Global Fire* and *WSSD Resistance* as well as the protests against pollution in the Vaal Triangle and Durban and the Greenpeace action against nuclear power.<sup>33</sup> This was a rationality of resistance based on highlighting environmental and development disasters and using the media to force government or corporations to act, described by Clive Barnett as “the politics of shame.”<sup>34</sup> It was a direct inversion of the exemplary rationality of partnerships, which focussed on positive and successful projects. As such the Youth Declaration at the Global People’s Forum stated “our opposition to the new reliance on the so-called ‘Type II’ partnerships, which we see as a cover-up for the failure of the multilateral process.”<sup>35</sup> Other speakers argued that “partnerships come in the guise of helping poor people. The reality is the contrary.”<sup>36</sup>

By highlighting the unsustainable effects of business as usual, the Summit protestors drew attention to the need to address the structural causes of poverty and environmental degradation, rather than simply promoting *ad hoc* specific

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<sup>30</sup> ‘Business is Brisk at Summit’, *News 24* (SA); JOWSCO, *Report of the Economic Impact*, pp. 9 – 12; ‘SA hotels eye Earth summit boom’, *News 24* (SA).

<sup>31</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, p. 30.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Teboho Mashota, APF Finance Administrator and SECC media liaison, (Johannesburg, 18/10/2006).

<sup>33</sup> Global Fire, *Burning Issues Facing Humanity*; WSSD Resistance, *Our World is Not for Sale! No WSSD!*

<sup>34</sup> C. Barnett, ‘Media transformation and new practices of citizenship: the example of environmental activism in post-apartheid Durban’, *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, 51, (2003), p. 9.

<sup>35</sup> ‘International Youth Statement’, in Civil Society Secretariat, *A Sustainable World is Possible*, p. 123.

<sup>36</sup> ‘Financing for Development Commission Report’, in Civil Society Secretariat, *A Sustainable World is Possible*, p. 30.

partnerships. This entailed re-asserting global visibility, “in the sure knowledge that social movements from all over the world share our belief that the present social and economic order is not sustainable.”<sup>37</sup> The SMI concluded that “only a global and united social movement can reverse and defeat the present policies that are impoverishing and destroying the planet and its people.”<sup>38</sup> The Global People’s Forum’s Programme of Action urged that “we have to build a strong resistance network that is interconnected and shows solidarity between all countries of the North and South, and East and West, to expose and unmask unsustainable corporate practices.”<sup>39</sup>

In this way the WSSD protests are an example of the constant re-negotiation between the local and the global in the politics of sustainable development. They represent what Ferguson and Gupta refer to as “a transnational ‘local’ that fuses the grassroots and the global” in creative and flexible new ways.<sup>40</sup> Claims by Summit delegates to represent the global interest were trumped by protestors who argued that the “fat cat bureaucrats and politicians” in Sandton did not represent them, asserting their own *more global* perspective.<sup>41</sup> In response to attempts to construct a space above politics where the global future could be reconciled, the protestors showed how the policies agreed at such summits produce chronically unsustainable conditions such as those in Alexandra.<sup>42</sup> Whilst the advanced liberal exemplary governmentality of the WSSD was predicated on the illumination of the most encouraging and optimistic examples of sustainable development, the protestors sought, through an inverse form of exemplary politics, to highlight some of the most troubling examples of unsustainable development. In their own way, therefore, the protestors also used the Summit stage to assert their global perspective on behalf of the world’s poor. This apparent paradox was identified at Rio in 1992 by Chatterjee and Finger. They argued that such protests fell into the “UNCED visibility trap”, in that no matter “whether they sought to promote or protest against the idea of sustainable development, whether they sought to feed into Rio or organise alternative meetings”, they all

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<sup>37</sup> SMI, *Our World is Not for Sale! Social Movements Indaba Statement on WSSD*, press release.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> ‘Global Peoples Forum Programme of Action’, in Civil Society Secretariat, *A Sustainable World is Possible*, p. 22.

<sup>40</sup> Ferguson and Gupta, ‘Spatializing States’, p. 995.

<sup>41</sup> SMI, Press Release, 25/08/2002.

<sup>42</sup> Bond, *Unsustainable South Africa*, pp. 9 – 14.



worked to “increase the visibility of the UNCED process.”<sup>43</sup> In the same way the protests at the WSSD both contested and reinforced the summit rationality. The logic of attempting to hold a *global* summit was not contested by protestors; rather it was the specific interests promoted at the Summit which were resisted.

### ***Regimes of knowledge***

The regimes of knowledge invoked by the protestors in Johannesburg had an ambiguous and often contradictory relationship to those inside the official Summit. Whilst many environmentalist protestors asserted the scientific case for issues like climate change in order to press for more urgent governmental action, others drew attention to the ways in which local, democratic and indigenous forms of knowledge were preferable to the hegemony of scientific, technological and economic forms of knowledge.<sup>44</sup> Ironically, however, in order to draw attention to their struggles the most successful protestors were those who adeptly utilised similar forms of media and communication strategies to the ones prevalent within the mainstream WSSD.

Many of the protests at the WSSD demanded more action on social and environmental issues, and they frequently used scientific forms of knowledge to support their case. The perceived lack of international action on climate change was a major focus for many protestors in Johannesburg, in particular international NGOs such as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and WWF.<sup>45</sup> These groups urged that action was necessary on the basis of the overwhelming scientific evidence. Even the SMI campaigned on a platform that included ending “the destructively wasteful use of fuels” and on behalf of “a clean environment, safe energy and sufficient water for all.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Chatterjee and Finger, *The Earth Brokers*, p. 90.

<sup>44</sup> ‘Traditional Knowledge Systems Commission Report and Monitoring and Assessment Commission Report’, in Civil Society Secretariat, *A Sustainable World is Possible*, pp. 56 – 57.

<sup>45</sup> Friends of the Earth Europe, *Countdown to Johannesburg: Key Demands for the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, (July 2002); Greenpeace International, *Climate Change at the WSSD*, Briefing paper #2 for PrepCom III; WWF, *Johannesburg Summit: Recommended Areas for Action: Promoting Equitable and Environmentally Sustainable Development*, (September 2001), p. 3.

<sup>46</sup> SMI, *Our World is Not for Sale!*

However, many protestors also sought to resist the discursive framing of sustainable development in terms of risk assessment, technological solutions and market-based forms of knowledge. Stephen Law, Director of the Environmental Monitoring Group, criticised the manner in which sustainable development has become “simply a matter of finding and applying the right corrective technology – be it GM crops to feed the world, cheaper drugs to cure disease, cleaner energy to keep industry going, better satellite imagery to view the destruction of the rainforests” and so on.<sup>47</sup> The logic of combating climate change through carbon trading – on which initiatives such as the Johannesburg Climate Legacy rested – was also explicitly contested, with critiques of the Kyoto Protocol for having “become so much of a mechanism for managing global carbon trade that the issue of real emission cuts has been marginalised.”<sup>48</sup> The Summit of Indigenous People’s registered their opposition to “the implementation of carbon sinks and carbon-trading mechanisms in the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol.”<sup>49</sup>

These protests therefore negotiated a delicate balance between challenging the basis of scientific knowledge, and using that knowledge tactically in order to force action on certain issues. This has been a long-running challenge for environmental movements.<sup>50</sup> Groups such as GroundWork and the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA) have pursued dual strategies of both contesting the dominant scientific and technical knowledge advanced by industry, as well as responding to industry with their own scientific data on health impacts and pollution levels, for example using ‘bucket brigades’ to measure water and air pollution levels.<sup>51</sup> Such strategic negotiations of the politics of truth reflect Foucault’s insight that ecological movements have often been opposed

to a science or, at least, to a technology underwritten by claims to truth. But this same ecology articulated its own discourse of truth: criticism was authorised in the name of a knowledge of nature, the balance of life processes, and so on. Thus, one escaped from a domination of truth not by playing a game that was totally different from the

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<sup>47</sup> Law, ‘Summit of Missed Opportunities’.

<sup>48</sup> Y. Sokona, A. Najam and S. Huq, *Climate Change and Sustainable Development: Views from the South*, (London; IIED, 2002), p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> ‘The Indigenous People’s Plan of Implementation on Sustainable Development’, in Civil Society Secretariat, *A Sustainable World is Possible*, p. 118.

<sup>50</sup> Beck, *Ecological Politics in an Age of Risk*; E. Darier, ‘Foucault and the Environment: An Introduction’, in Darier, *Discourses of the Environment*, pp. 3 – 4.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Des D’Sa, Chairman of the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, (Durban, 15/12/2006); interview with Bobby Peek, Director of Groundwork, (Durban, 07/12/2006).

game of truth but by playing the same game differently, or playing another game, another hand, with other trump cards.<sup>52</sup>

These 'other trump cards' which the protestors in Johannesburg mobilised included ever-more creative, imaginative and communicative tactics, often intended to persuade through emotive, empathetic or aesthetic appeals rather than scientific or economic logic. Banners, effigies, street theatre, placards and satire were all deployed. In Bali, for example, Greenpeace sailed a giant effigy of a three-headed dragon representing George Bush up to the beach near to the conference venue.<sup>53</sup> The Indonesian police refused to let the dragon land and, in a compromise, Greenpeace decided to burn the effigy at sea, further adding to media coverage. The peaceful candle-lit march in Johannesburg on 24 August and the unexpected brutality of the police response attracted instant international media coverage for the protestors, who included internationally prominent global justice activists and authors such as Vandana Shiva, Njoki Njehu, Maude Barlow, Tony Clarke, Naomi Klein, Anuradha Mittal and John Saul, all with access to international media and broadcasting.<sup>54</sup> Activists filmed the confrontation, arguing that "our rights are being trampled upon ... it is a disgrace that during the WSSD repression is going on like this."<sup>55</sup> The clash had an international media resonance "because it was at night, and they had candles, it was dramatic, it speaks to the mainstream audience, to CNN."<sup>56</sup>

Media strategies and skilful use of communicative forms of knowledge were therefore just as important for the protestors at the WSSD as they were for the participants and organisers. In South Africa, as Barnett has shown, these creative and dramaturgical forms of activist politics have been welcomed by a broader media eager for "a 'people-centred' journalism and 'story-telling' modes of address."<sup>57</sup> The protests at the WSSD were not therefore operating on a different plain of knowledge to those of the official delegates, but rather they sought to invert and twist official

<sup>52</sup> Foucault, 'On the Ethics of Concern for Self', p. 295.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Tonya Vaturi, Programme Associate for Major Groups, Division for Sustainable Development, DESA, (New York, 16/10/2007).

<sup>54</sup> 'Clashes at Earth Summit Protest', *CNN* (US), 25/08/2002; Klein, 'The Summit that couldn't save itself', *The Guardian* (UK), 'Police Clash with Summit Protesters', *BBC News* (UK), 24/08/2002.

<sup>55</sup> APF, *Arresting Dissent*.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Trevor Ngwane, SECC and APF, (Soweto, 28/09/2006).

<sup>57</sup> Barnett, 'Media transformation and new practices of citizenship', p. 7. See also C. Barnett and D. Scott, 'Spaces of Opposition: Activism and Deliberation in post-Apartheid Environmental Politics', *Environment and Planning A*, 39, (2007), pp. 2612 – 2631.

mobilisations of science, advertising and branding on the Summit stage, contesting them, disrupting them and articulating competing alternatives.

### *Techniques and technologies*

The techniques of protest adopted at the WSSD were varied and heterogeneous. Whilst many protestors demanded that governments fulfil their responsibilities and govern sustainable more intensely, others took to the streets rejecting conventional discourses of targets, timeframes and partnerships. The image of marchers on the streets singing, dancing and waving placards was one that dominated public perceptions of the protests, yet most protestors articulated a vision of sustainable development that echoed the Global Deal proposals being put forward by delegates within the WSSD.

The march on 31 August and the clashes with police on 24 August and 2 September were, for many, the archetypal manifestations of resistance, evoking familiar repertoires of protest.<sup>58</sup> Rather than engage with the Summit debates over targets, timeframes and partnerships they resorted to the demonstrative and carnivalesque tactics associated with the anti-globalisation movement.<sup>59</sup> The marches grabbed media attention, with South African newspaper the *Sowetan* reporting that “the SMI had received a high media profile during the marches that had taken place against the Summit. The movement had clashed with police on a number of occasions, each time getting widespread media coverage for their cause.”<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, as Clifford Bob notes, “apart from drawing attention, protest marches and demonstrations can prove to international actors that a movement has a vibrant local constituency and a pressing problem, thereby assuaging concerns about the movement’s legitimacy.”<sup>61</sup>

The protestors’ tactic of organising mass marches was significant in two main ways: in acting as a unifying and identity-forming experience, and in humiliating the

<sup>58</sup> Bayat, ‘Uncivil Society’, p. 63; Della Porta and Diana, *Social Movements*, p. 185.

<sup>59</sup> P. Doran, ‘Streetwise Provocations: the “Global Justice” Movement’s take on sustainable development’, *International Journal of Green Economics*, 1, 1/2, (2006), pp. 151 – 168.

<sup>60</sup> W. Misbach, ‘New grouping sizes up ANC’, *The Sowetan* (SA), 02/09/2002.

<sup>61</sup> C. Bob, ‘Marketing Rebellion: Insurgent Groups, International Media and NGO Support’, *International Politics*, 38, (2001), p. 315.

ANC on the Summit stage. First, participating in a mass march was an inspirational process for many people and the experience of 31 August has had a lasting legacy for many South African social movements. In 2006 the SMI proudly looked back at the march as “the landmark in the history of social movement cooperation.”<sup>62</sup> For activists like Veriava the marches played a role in “forging an imagination of a commons, of some space that we exist in together.”<sup>63</sup> As Elias Canetti famously explained,

in that density, where there is scarcely any space between, and body presses against body, each man is as near the other as he is to himself; and an immense feeling of relief ensues. It is for the sake of this blessed moment, when no one is greater or better than another, that people become a crowd.<sup>64</sup>

Through such marches the social movements acquired their identity, and as Desai proudly asserted, “this is a struggle that already has heroes, legends, and martyrs.”<sup>65</sup>

Secondly, the choice of marching as a technique was significant in that it aimed to directly challenge the South African Government on its own ground, using its own tactics. ANC history is rooted in protest politics, and Alexandra has been one of their historic heartlands. Despite a decade and a half in government the ANC still “yearns to remain a grassroots, mass-mobilised party.”<sup>66</sup> When permission was granted for the social movements to march on 31 August, the ANC simultaneously announced they would be leading the official civil society march which would also progress from Alex to Sandton. Supported by traditional mass organisations including the trade unions and the civics, they expected to easily outnumber the social movements and confidently predicted 20,000 people at their march.<sup>67</sup> In this context, the numerical superiority of the social movements was a massive humiliation.<sup>68</sup> A triumphant SMI press statement later crowed that “a new movement is being built that

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<sup>62</sup> Hlatshwayo, *Secretary's Report*.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Ahmed Veriava, SMI and Freedom of Expression Institute, (Durban, 02/12/2006).

<sup>64</sup> E. Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, (tr. C. Stewart), (Harmondsworth; Penguin, 1973), p. 19.

<sup>65</sup> Desai, ‘Neoliberalism and Resistance in South Africa’, p. 10. Such an interpretation of the significance of protest echoes aspects of Blühdorn’s interpretation of social movements as functioning to affirm individual agency and identity. Blühdorn, ‘Self-Experience in the Theme Park of Radical Action?’

<sup>66</sup> R. Calland, *Anatomy of South Africa: Who holds the Power?*, (Cape Town; Zebra Press, 2006), p. 116.

<sup>67</sup> ‘Jo’burg Braces for Big Marches’, *Mail & Guardian* (SA), 23-29/08/2002. See also ANC, ‘Democratic movement joins global day of action’, *ANC Today*, 2, 35, 30-05/08-09/2002.

<sup>68</sup> Interview with Bheki Ntshalintshali, Deputy General Secretary COSATU, (Johannesburg, 04/10/2006).

for the first time since 1994, poses the potential of a serious challenge to the South African government amongst its historic core constituency – the broad working class.”<sup>69</sup> SMI spokesman Dale McKinley was jubilant: “We embarrassed them in their own back yard,” he was quoted as saying, “their grassroots structures are decimated.”<sup>70</sup>

That these marches took place at the WSSD on the Summit stage was especially significant. Choosing to march in the full view of the global community was predicated on humiliating the government, and post-Summit assessments of the march by participants claimed it “shattered Mbeki’s image – it was a PR disaster”, specifically because “the whole world saw us.”<sup>71</sup> The global stage also conditioned the state’s response to the marches, and it was the international condemnation of the policing of the candle-lit march on 24 August that forced the authorities to grant permission for the march on 31 August.<sup>72</sup> COSATU General Secretary Zwelinzima Vavi told the *Mail & Guardian* that “it would be quite a horrible statement if the world came for the first time into democratic South Africa and the people were not able to march ... the last thing we want is a city with blood on the floor.”<sup>73</sup> The South African Government was acutely aware of the international media gaze, and one Summit organiser recollected that “at one point I had to stop a meeting and run to Sandton. These American kids are demonstrating. They have no permit. The Jo’burg Metro [police] want to arrest them. Then you worry that the media are going to pitch up. It’ll be the headlines tomorrow.”<sup>74</sup> Under pressure from the global media, and keen to perform its role as a responsible leader on the international stage, the ANC reaction to the protests was, somewhat reluctantly, “to call on the South African Police service to exercise restraint and tolerance, even in respect of those demonstrators who have themselves chosen the path of provocation and violence.”<sup>75</sup>

The tactic of taking to the streets therefore had many advantages for the protestors, in terms of both solidifying their own collective identity and challenging established power relations. Yet such marches were not necessarily in complete

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<sup>69</sup> SMI, Press Release, 01/09/2002.

<sup>70</sup> Malan, ‘New Reds Challenge ANC and Win Skirmish’.

<sup>71</sup> APF, *Assessment of WSSD Mobilisation and Activities*, conducted by the 8 September 2002 Co-ordinating Committee Meeting.

<sup>72</sup> S. Brummer, ‘How summit march road was cleared’, *Mail & Guardian* (SA), 30/08-05/09/2002; interview with Dale McKinley, SMI Press Secretary, (Johannesburg, 23/10/2006).

<sup>73</sup> Brummer, ‘How summit march road was cleared’, *Mail & Guardian* (SA).

<sup>74</sup> Interview with JP Louw, stakeholder relations in JOWSCO, (Midrand, 17/10/2006).

<sup>75</sup> ANC, *Statement on the WSSD*, 25/08/2002.

opposition to the WSSD enterprise. First, many Summit organisers saw the marches as a positive ‘alternative dimension’ to the official negotiations, and Olver remarked that “protest adds an extremely important and colourful element to the whole thing. So it needs to be constructively brought in. But at the same time we were not going to let anything get out of control.”<sup>76</sup> The marches contributed to the high public profile of the WSSD and sustainable development. Secondly, large numbers of protestors used the marches to intervene in particular debates within the official negotiations. In particular, many supported the Global Deal proposals: stricter targets, firm timeframes, binding international conventions and regulations, and enforced corporate accountability. Thus a coalition of South African NGOs called “on South Africa to stand firm in its demand for a strong, Type 1 outcome.”<sup>77</sup> Friends of the Earth declared that “robust legally binding measures are, in the end, essential if sustainable development issues are to be dealt with effectively.”<sup>78</sup> Greenpeace International Director Remi Parmentier told media that “the failure to include concrete targets and timetables for action on sustainable development defeats the entire purpose of the Summit.”<sup>79</sup> The Youth statement to the Global People’s Forum angrily noted that “we are outraged by one government in particular – the United States of America – and its attempts to undermine and sabotage agreements at this summit.”<sup>80</sup> These articulations of resistance were therefore directed at the partnership rationality of government, and demanded instead a more interventionist, more disciplinary form of sustainable development governance. As such they were not a total rejection of summitry, multilateral UN politics, or the idea of global governance for sustainable development. Instead they were often an extension of the debates inside the convention centre; in the context of an emerging neo-liberal consensus on voluntary partnerships they were a strident demand “not to be governed *like that*.”<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Interview with Chippy Olver, Director General of DEAT and chairman of JOWSCO, (Johannesburg, 05/10/2006).

<sup>77</sup> SANGOCO *et al*, *South African NGO statement*.

<sup>78</sup> Friends of the Earth, *That’s all very well but...*

<sup>79</sup> “‘We’ll Take Sandton’”, *Mail & Guardian* (SA), 15/08/2002.

<sup>80</sup> ‘International Youth Statement’, in Civil Society Secretariat, *A Sustainable World is Possible*, p. 122.

<sup>81</sup> Foucault, ‘What is Critique’, p. 44.

### *Production of subjectivities*

The forms of resistance adopted at the WSSD were varied and heterogeneous. However, what united them were their attempts to disrupt and contest the discourses of consensus, co-operation and partnership that dominated at the WSSD. For many of the protestors, their own identities and roles were predicated upon an oppositional stance, and as Seyfang and Jordan note, “environmental pressure groups usually criticise politicians for not doing enough when they arrive at mega-conferences, but they have their own reasons for attending and being seen to confront political leaders and industry representatives.”<sup>82</sup> The fundamental objective of the marches was “to draw the political lines more clearly”, and for Dale McKinley, “what the WSSD did, not just internationally but also internally, is that it drew a line”, which “represents nothing less than a clear ideological and organisational divide amongst historically progressive forces in South Africa.”<sup>83</sup> However, the success of the protestors in constructing this clear line between power and resistance at the WSSD was only ever partial and temporary.

From the start of the preparatory process in South Africa differing conceptions of civil society had divided participants. COSATU’s involvement in the civil society process provoked tensions, and Ntshalintshali later conceded that

our involvement was seen by others in civil society as like Big Brother trying to correct a number of issues ... There were people that were unhappy, and I think the debate was mainly around whether the ANC, or the liberation organisation, or the political party, should be part of the civil society. I think there is still a debate about those things.<sup>84</sup>

For the SMI, COSATU’s involvement was “part of a political strategy to control and silence civil society, and place the WSSD process under government control.”<sup>85</sup> They left the official WSSD process because of state interference, stating they wanted “to carry on a civil society process that is independent from government and rooted

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<sup>82</sup> Seyfang and Jordan, ‘The Johannesburg Summit and Sustainable Development’, p. 22.

<sup>83</sup> APF, *Assessment of WSSD Mobilisation and Activities*; interview with Dale McKinley, SMI Press Secretary, (Johannesburg, 23/10/2006); D. McKinley, ‘Democracy and Social Movements in South Africa’, in Padayachee, *The Development Decade*, p. 418.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with Bheki Ntshalintshali, Deputy General Secretary COSATU, (Johannesburg, 04/10/2006).

<sup>85</sup> Civil Society Indaba, *CS Indaba walks out of WSSD NGO Forum*.



among the working people.”<sup>86</sup> This was grounded in a classically liberal desire to establish ‘civil society’ as a sphere free from state intervention. One prominent activist explained that the WSSD conflicts were fundamentally about whether the ANC would tolerate an autonomous civil society, claiming that, “very simply put, it was a fight over whether the government operating in the person of the ANC and the person of the Alliance, whether they’d be able to dictate a civil society agenda.”<sup>87</sup> Authoritarian behaviour by the state seemed to threaten this space, and more than once comparisons were made between ANC policing and Apartheid-era repression.<sup>88</sup> An SMI statement in the aftermath of the violence against the candle-lit march on the 24 August indicated this apprehension.

The events of this evening are only further confirmation of the ever-narrowing space in the ‘new’ South Africa, for the exercise of the basic constitutional and human rights to freedom of expression and assembly. If it was not before, it should now be crystal clear that the South African government is hell-bent on smashing legitimate dissent by whatever means they deem appropriate, including attacking peaceful marchers and terrorising children. The ghosts of the South African past are returning with a vengeance.<sup>89</sup>

This assertion of basic constitutional and human rights was a demand for the South African state to behave like a responsible liberal democracy, and for many of the protestors this was their main aim.<sup>90</sup>

On the other hand, more radical protestors articulated a critique of the state based on a ‘class-war’ view of politics. For these intellectuals and activists the South African state was regarded as having become “the local and continental agent of imperialism.”<sup>91</sup> Patrick Bond, for example, described Mbeki and his ministers as “‘compradors’ – i.e., agents of the global establishment.”<sup>92</sup> For many of these protestors therefore the marches were more than a demand to be heard or for the state to implement its constitution, instead they were about building “the ‘base’ of a movement that could

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Oupa Lehlere, quoted in P. Dwyer, *The World Conference Against Racism and The World Summit On Sustainable Development: A Window Into Civil Society Relations In Post-Apartheid South Africa*, Research paper prepared for UNRISD project, unpublished, (2003), p. 25.

<sup>88</sup> Duguid, ‘ANC “behaving like Nat regime”’, *Mail & Guardian* (SA).

<sup>89</sup> SMI, Press Release, 24/08/2002.

<sup>90</sup> Appendix B, image #6.

<sup>91</sup> Appolis, ‘The Political Significance of August 31’, p. 10.

<sup>92</sup> Bond, *Talk Left, Walk Right*, p. 4. See also J. S. Saul, ‘The Hares, The Hounds and the African National Congress: on Joining the Third World in post-Apartheid South Africa’, *Third World Quarterly*, 25, 1, (2004), pp. 73 – 86.

in the long term challenge the ANC at the polls.”<sup>93</sup> *The Citizen* reported that “marchers threatened the government that if it ‘does not address our issues and do what the people demand, we will do to them what we did to the apartheid government.”<sup>94</sup> In a much-quoted statement, Ngwane claimed that the marchers desired to shut down the Summit and “take Sandton.”<sup>95</sup> This rationality of resistance as total struggle against a class enemy was set out in one SMI statement:

As social movements active in the South African context we know that rulers committed to capitalism have never changed their environmentally destructive ways without mass struggles by those affected by these policies. Nor have they changed policies that deny democratic rights without struggle and sacrifice on the part of the oppressed. We also know that without struggle and organisations the policies of exploitation pursued by the multinational corporation cannot be changed. ... Above all else, our resolve to struggle is strengthened by the many struggles currently taking place in South Africa against the effects of neoliberalism, and against new oppressors and exploiters.<sup>96</sup>

Within this more radical rationality of resistance, the notion of co-operating or entering into partnership with the state, the UN system, or multinational corporations was anathema. Corporate involvement in environmental initiatives was dismissed as “greenwash” and UN initiatives like the Global Compact and Type II partnerships as “bluewash.”<sup>97</sup>

Such rationalities of resistance adopted a starker view of politics as fundamentally bipolar. For Vula Mthimkhulu, writing in the civil society newspaper *Global Fire*, the Summit presented an opportunity to “popularise the struggle against forces of evil”, and “the genuine enemies masquerading as comrades during the Summit.”<sup>98</sup> In this vein more violent visions of political action were articulated, including placards reading “Bomb Sandton”, and talk of occupying and blockading

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<sup>93</sup> Misbach, ‘New grouping sizes up ANC’, *The Sowetan* (SA). See P. Bond, ‘Johannesburg’s Resurgent Social Movements’, in Gibson, *Challenging Hegemony*, p. 104; Gentle, ‘Social Movements in South Africa’; SMI, Press Release, 01/09/2002.

<sup>94</sup> Venter, ‘Summit marchers attack government’, *The Citizen* (SA).

<sup>95</sup> Duguid, ‘ANC “behaving like Nat regime”’, *Mail & Guardian* (SA); C. Kgosana, ‘Rebel with a cause – the poor’, *The Star* (SA), 28/08/2002; ‘Militants warn: “we’ll shut down Summit”’, *The Citizen* (SA), 28/08/2002; B. Ngqiyaza and S. Fatah, ‘Coalition hopes to shut down summit’, *Business Day* (SA), 23/08/2002; “‘We’ll Take Sandton’”, *Mail & Guardian* (SA).

<sup>96</sup> SMI, *Our World is Not for Sale!*

<sup>97</sup> Bruno and Karliner explain that “greenwash” ranges between environmental image advertising and “the political effort to avoid democratic control of corporate behaviour through a combination of PR and lobbying muscle.” “Bluewash” is the practice of wrapping a corporation in the UN’s flag, such as endorsing the Global Compact whilst simultaneously having violated at least one of its principles. Bruno and Karliner, *earthsummit.biz*, pp. 77 – 78.

<sup>98</sup> V. Mthimkhulu, ‘Naked body of the poor exposed in the sumptuous warmth of Sandton’, *Global Fire* (SA), 22/08/2002.

the M1 motorway into Johannesburg.<sup>99</sup> Other radical activists on the left decried the efforts of SMI marshals to ensure a peaceful march, lamenting that the end result was “domesticated.”<sup>100</sup>

Politics, for these protestors, was not a question of reconciliation, consensus or partnership. Yet the degree to which such starkly binary views represented the outlook of a majority of the protestors, or the degree to which they captured the complex polycentric ways in which rule is exercised in contemporary global politics, is doubtful. Most organisers insisted that violence had never been their aim. John Appolis stressed that it was “not intended to be an open confrontation with the police and the army, but was envisaged as a legal and peaceful one whose main task was to popularise our political and organisational objectives.”<sup>101</sup> Moreover, most of the protestors at the WSSD had an ambiguous relationship to the ANC and the South African government. The social movements’ leaders and ideologues have, as one recent contribution suggests, risked “ignoring the large percentage of the members of their own organisations that continue to support the ANC.”<sup>102</sup> Among many activists support for the ANC remains strong, and many of the new social movements have their roots in organisations linked or allied to the ANC.<sup>103</sup> In an SMI meeting in 2003 convened to review the WSSD, some delegates made the point that “the anti-ANC march was not entirely directed at the ANC but rather at the economic policies which it chooses to implement.”<sup>104</sup> The EJNF expressed their concern after the WSSD that “the SMI was standing on platforms they perceived to be too ‘anti-government’, too antagonistic.”<sup>105</sup>

Attempts by radical protestors to establish a binary between an authoritarian and capitalist ‘state’ and a realm of free and democratic social movements also fail to capture the diversity of institutions and modes through which rule is exercised. The apparently monolithic state is in fact composed of many different institutions and aspects, and the SMI conceded in an internal discussion in 2004 that on the subject of

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<sup>99</sup> Hooper-Box *et al*, ‘Victory for peaceful protest as marches go smoothly’, *The Sunday Independent* (SA); interview with Ahmed Veriava, SMI and Freedom of Expression Institute, (Durban, 02/12/2006).

<sup>100</sup> F. Barchiesi, ‘Marching on the Left: Before and After August 31’, *Khanya Journal*, 2, (2002), p. 15.

<sup>101</sup> Appolis, ‘The Political Significance of August 31’, p. 8.

<sup>102</sup> R. Ballard, A. Habib and I. Valodia, ‘Conclusion: Making Sense of post-Apartheid South Africa’s Voices of Protest’, in Ballard *et al*, *Voices of Protest*, p. 401.

<sup>103</sup> Desai, *We Are The Poors*, p. 41; interview with Mashile Phalame, Earthlife Africa, (Johannesburg, 18/09/2006).

<sup>104</sup> SMI, *WSSD Review Session*, 13/02/2003, (unpublished).

<sup>105</sup> APF, *Social Movements Indaba Tracks Back*, (April 2003).

the Alliance's National Democratic Revolution, the "moral authority of the project is still high."<sup>106</sup> Radical voices agreed that "the South African ruling class still enjoys political and constitutional legitimacy."<sup>107</sup> Many groups used the Summit as an opportunity to criticise specific environmental or economic policies, but afterwards returned to working with the ANC and the national, provincial and local state on a day-to-day basis.<sup>108</sup> Others supported the work of DEAT in its attempts to regulate corporations.<sup>109</sup> Anti-pollution community organisations such as the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance and the Steel Valley Crisis Committee were able to use the international spotlight of the WSSD to raise awareness about their campaigns, aiming to pressurise the South African Government into enforcing environmental regulations.<sup>110</sup> Richard Worthington from Earthlife Africa explained that they tried to deal with the issues of nuclear power and renewable energy separately, since their attitude on the former is "government we think you're really screwing up, while the other [it] is government you're showing some promise now let's get serious."<sup>111</sup> Often even the same individuals will, as Ashwin Desai admitted, praise the history of the ANC as anti-Apartheid liberators at the same time as the cost recovery policies of local government are condemned:

If Thabo Mbeki comes around, or Mandela, to remember the 16 June Soweto Uprising, people still see the need to go to the meeting and chant the slogans of the party of liberation: the ANC, slayer of apartheid. But the next day they are fighting evictions, and denouncing the ANC as a party of neoliberalism.<sup>112</sup>

These multiple aspects of 'the South African state' reveal the impossibility of reducing political landscapes to that of a homogenous state opposed by grassroots resistance.

Attitudes towards the UN, international society and the WSSD were also mixed. Whilst decrying the "craven and flatulent" tone of the Summit, many critical voices continue to regard the UN as a potentially progressive sphere in which the

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<sup>106</sup> SMI, *National Meeting 18 – 21/03/2004*, Johannesburg, 2004, (unpublished).

<sup>107</sup> Appolis, 'The Political Significance of August 31', p. 9.

<sup>108</sup> J. Ledger, 'African Wildlife Meets the Minister', *African Wildlife*, 58, 4, (2004); WESSA, 'WESSA's View on Partnerships for Implementation', *African Wildlife*, 56, 3, (2002), p. 13.

<sup>109</sup> Interview with Bobby Peek, Director of Groundwork, (Durban, 07/12/2006); interview with Des D'Sa, Chairman of the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, (Durban, 15/12/2006).

<sup>110</sup> Cock and Munnik, *Throwing Stones at a Giant*, p. 32; Groundwork, *Quarterly Newsletter*.

<sup>111</sup> Interview with Richard Worthington, Earthlife Africa, (Johannesburg, 31/10/2006).

<sup>112</sup> H. W. Spaulding, 'Between the Broken and the Built', an interview with Ashwin Desai in *Notes from Nowhere, We Are Everywhere*, p. 488.

weakest developing nation has a vote equal to that of the most powerful.<sup>113</sup> For these reasons Earthlife Africa chose to participate in the Global People's Forum and lobbied at Sandton, whilst at the same time they had members marching with the SMI on 31 August.<sup>114</sup> Groundwork supported the SMI, but spent most of their time and energy on their own 'Corporate Accountability Week' which received high-profile attention from government, delegates, and international NGOs.<sup>115</sup> Ceasefire, EMG and GEM all participated at Nasrec and lobbied in Sandton, but also marched with the SMI. The very existence and funding of many of these critical NGOs was also closely tied to, and facilitated by, Northern NGOs, foundations and governments.<sup>116</sup> Rather than a binary conflict between North and South, or 'the people' against 'the rulers', many of those who participated in and protested against the WSSD were bound together in rhizome networks of global governmentality.

Overall, therefore, whilst the protestors attempted to use the marches to establish a clear line between governed and governing, and there were serious disruptions to the Summit discourses of partnership, consensus and compromise, ultimately this crude simplification of global politics as a binary struggle between progressives and reactionaries foundered on the variegated networks of global and local governance. The clear line of division the protestors sought to establish was continually blurred, transgressed and erased. As such, rather than viewing the WSSD protests as pure forms of resistance against a monolithic governing power, or trying to identify which were 'true' acts of resistance and which were reformist, we can rather interpret the WSSD protests as manifestations of Foucauldian "counter-conducts."<sup>117</sup>

### ***Protest and the limits of advanced liberal government***

The protests at the WSSD both subverted and reinforced dominant modes of advanced liberal government. Yet to claim this is not to argue that ultimately such

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<sup>113</sup> Middleton and O'Keefe, *Rio Plus Ten*, p. 107.

<sup>114</sup> Interview with Richard Worthington, Earthlife Africa, (Johannesburg, 31/10/2006).

<sup>115</sup> Groundwork, *Quarterly Newsletter*; interview with Bobby Peek, Director of Groundwork, (Durban, 07/12/2006).

<sup>116</sup> Interview with Mashile Phalame, Earthlife Africa, (Johannesburg, 18/09/2006); South African NGO Caucus, *Towards the World Summit on Sustainable Development*.

<sup>117</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 201.

counter-conducts are unimportant, or that they have no effect. Middleton and O’Keefe, for example, argue that by protesting at the Summit and “acting as if a major reversal of the outcomes of the [PrepCom] committees was possible at the Summit itself, the INGOs were simply adding their bit-parts to the performance.”<sup>118</sup> This dismissal of dissent as purely theatrical (and by implication unimportant) fails to appreciate how the different ways in which protestors negotiated their relationships with the WSSD, the UN and the South African government produced significant political effects.

One of the effects of the forms of counter-conduct adopted at the Summit was, by challenging and disrupting the discourses of partnership and consensus, to establish the existence of limits to the politics of advanced liberal government. Those actors who were willing to dissent and critique, but ultimately signalled their willingness to behave responsibly and enter into partnerships and constructive dialogue were accepted as political actors, important players in the implementation of sustainable development. However, those who sought to draw the line more explicitly between power and resistance at the WSSD were marginalised, repressed and excluded from the politics of sustainable development. By explicitly contesting its performance of reconciliation, unity and consensus these protestors threatened to undermine the South African brand as successful negotiators, and the exemplary performance of sustainable development at the WSSD. The South African Government responded by marginalising, criticising, criminalising and/or repressing those who did so. The vilification and demonisation of protest at the Summit needs to be understood in the context of the hierarchical and authoritarian tendencies of the ANC as a party, its constructed role as leader of the ‘National Democratic Revolution’, and the challenge the protestors posed to the South African brand as a united and reconciled country, as well as within the discursive context of the Summit’s stress on consensus and cooperative partnerships. The political effects of these responses were serious for many individual organisations, as well as broader framings of state-civil society relationships in South Africa and beyond.

The history of the ANC and their role in the anti-Apartheid struggle has produced a party with centrist, hierarchical and often authoritarian attitudes to

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<sup>118</sup> Middleton and O’Keefe, *Rio Plus Ten*, p. 95.

government.<sup>119</sup> These deep historical tendencies have been exacerbated by the generational shift from ‘the island generation’ (such as Mandela) to ‘the exiles’ (such as Mbeki), since the latter developed a highly secretive, military-style of politics which stressed loyalty and obedience.<sup>120</sup> Pallo Jordan, an ANC MP and government minister, has admitted that “governing a country has reinforced the centripetal tendencies in the movement’s culture.”<sup>121</sup> The ANC has massive electoral dominance, winning 63 per cent of the popular vote in 1994, 66.4 per cent in 1999, and 69.7 per cent in 2004, which has further strengthened their mandate for strong leadership.<sup>122</sup> This electoral endorsement has made it easy to write off parliamentary opposition as conservative or reactionary; however internal critique has been treated more harshly with critical voices being publicly disciplined or expelled.<sup>123</sup>

The party emphasis on unity, loyalty and consensus stems partly from their struggle history, but also from the perception of the ongoing National Democratic Revolution as a continuation of the liberation battle. During the transition from Apartheid rule to democracy the major anti-Apartheid organisations, including the South African Communist Party, the trade unions, the United Democratic Front and the civics, all supported or formally allied themselves with the ANC. As a result the ANC have since tended to assume that “history has bequeathed on it the mission to lead South African society as a whole in the quest for a truly non-racial, non-sexist and democratic nation.”<sup>124</sup> It is therefore orthodoxy within the ANC that “the

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<sup>119</sup> Calland, *Anatomy of South Africa*, p. 125; M. Galvin and A. Habib, ‘The Politics of Decentralisation and Donor Funding in South Africa’s Rural Water Sector’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29, 4, (2003), pp. 865 – 884; K. Johnson, ‘State and Civil Society in Contemporary South Africa: Redefining the Rules of the Game’, in S. Jacobs and R. Calland (eds.), *Thabo Mbeki’s World: The Politics and Ideology of the South African President*, (London; Zed Books, 2002), pp. 222 and 231; R. Southall, ‘Democracy in Southern Africa: Moving Beyond a Difficult Legacy’, *Review of African Political Economy*, 96, (2003), pp. 255 – 272.

<sup>120</sup> W. M. Gumede, *Thabo Mbeki and the Battle for the Soul of the ANC*, (Cape Town; Zebra Press, 2005), pp. 40 – 41. See also S. Friedman, ‘South Africa: Building Democracy After Apartheid’, in E. Gyimah-Boadi (ed.), *Democratic Reform in Africa: The Quality of Progress*, (London; Lynne Rienner, 2004), pp. 237 – 238.

<sup>121</sup> P. Jordan, ‘The African National Congress: From Illegality to the Corridors of Power’, *Review of African Political Economy*, 100, (2004), p. 209.

<sup>122</sup> South African Election Results, [www.elections.org.za](http://www.elections.org.za)

<sup>123</sup> In one well-reported incident during 2002, SACP Deputy General Secretary Jeremy Cronin was forced to publicly apologise for critical comments made about the ‘ZANU-fication’ of the ANC and the clampdown on internal dissent. For Mbeki’s scarcely veiled anger in response to Cronin’s comments, see T. Mbeki, ‘Unity of democratic forces must be based on honesty’, *ANC Today*, 2, 34, 23-29/08/2002. See also T. Mbeki, ‘The Masses are not Blind’, *ANC Today*, 2, 40, 4-10/10/2002.

<sup>124</sup> ANC, ‘Strategy and Tactics’, delivered at the 50<sup>th</sup> Congress in 1997, quoted in S. Jensen, ‘The Battlefield and the Prize: ANC’s bid to reform the South African State’, in Hansen and Stepputat, *States of Imagination*, p. 98.

organisation is not merely a political party, but remains a liberation movement.”<sup>125</sup> The importance of progressive actors uniting behind the delivery of the National Democratic Revolution is a recurring theme in party and Government pronouncements.<sup>126</sup>

In this context the events of the World Conference against Racism (WCAR) held in Durban in August 2001 were hugely disappointing and frustrating for the ANC. The WCAR was a fractious and ill-tempered meeting, with fierce disputes over the definition and legacy of racism, reparations for slavery, and whether Israel’s policies in the Middle East constituted racism.<sup>127</sup> Civil society contributions to the conference were also divided, and in the aftermath the ANC conducted a review which heavily criticised the South African Non-Governmental Organisation Coalition (SANGOCO). The ANC concluded that “SANGOCO failed to mobilise South African civil society to play a constructive role in the forum”, instead allowing the agenda to be dominated by a narrow range of anti-ANC organisations which pursued a sectarian agenda.<sup>128</sup> The acrimony of the WCAR would haunt preparations for the WSSD, with the ANC making it clear that “as we prepare for the WSSD it is essential that we build a proper, democratic, consultative civil society process ... whoever claims to represent South African civil society has a very important responsibility.”<sup>129</sup> At the WSSD they urged “that progressives, both within government and in civil society, should act in solidarity to ensure that the WSSD does indeed address the important issues of poverty and underdevelopment.”<sup>130</sup>

Experiences such as the WCAR have exacerbated the ANC tendency to distrust independent, critical civil society voices, which stems from their history of a protracted and continuous struggle for survival and the necessity of a siege mentality during the anti-Apartheid years.<sup>131</sup> The ANC report on the WCAR, for example, noted that whilst NGOs

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<sup>125</sup> T. Lodge, ‘The ANC and the Development of Party Politics in Modern South Africa’, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 42, 2, (2004), p. 215.

<sup>126</sup> M. Sachs, ‘The Seattle Movement in Johannesburg’, *Umbulo*, 15, (2002).

<sup>127</sup> Bond, *Talk Left, Walk Right*, pp. 31 – 32; Schechter, *United Nations Global Conferences*, pp. 176 – 182.

<sup>128</sup> ANC, ‘Evaluating the WCAR NGO Forum (and preparing for the WSSD)’, *Umbulo*, 13, (2001).

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> ANC, *Statement on the WSSD*.

<sup>131</sup> Suspicion of NGOs is also common within South African social movements. See A. Mngxitama, ‘National Land Committee, 1994 – 2004: A Critical Insider’s Perspective’, in Gibson, *Challenging Hegemony*, pp. 157 – 201.



have an essential role to play in international processes, including the provision of technical advice, most have no independent social base and are tied to funding from interest groups, governments, corporations or foundations, often with self-interested agendas.<sup>132</sup>

The relationship between the state and society is primarily conceived as one in which the ANC provides political leadership and other actors, where they can be trusted, are mobilised for the implementation and delivery of policies and services. Barnett and Scott have argued that post-Apartheid “South African politics has been shaped by a strong impulse towards the inclusion of potential antagonists within networks of state patronage and policymaking.”<sup>133</sup> In an ANC discussion document in 1996, Mbeki set out his view of this relationship, which was that it

turns on the combination of the expertise and professionalism concentrated in the democratic state and the capacity for popular mobilisation which resides within the trade unions and the genuinely representative non-governmental popular organisations. The democratic state therefore has a responsibility to ensure that this independent and representative non-governmental sector has the necessary strength to play its role in ensuring that the people themselves, and in their own interest, become conscious activists for development and social transformation.<sup>134</sup>

Government, and indeed politics more generally, is therefore regarded as primarily about implementation, service delivery, efficiency and “getting things done” rather than the deepening of democracy in terms of debate, dissent and deliberation.<sup>135</sup> NGOs and civil society have been enlisted in this project, cast as “assistants to government in service delivery”, part of a “social partnership” together with government and business to further the “common national interest.”<sup>136</sup> To do this, however, NGOs and social movements must be willing to engage in partnerships. At the WSSD the ANC cautioned the Global People’s Forum that

as a progressive third world movement that has emerged from and inspired many ‘social movements’ we are also concerned by the ‘rejectionist’ tendencies of some in the emerging global movement. Certainly, the need for a ‘countervailing force’ against the arrogance of combined private/business and state interests should not be dismissed, and all would agree that the independence of ‘civil society’ is fundamental to democratic governance. On the other hand, we believe that the progressive

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<sup>132</sup> ANC, ‘Evaluating the WCAR NGO Forum’.

<sup>133</sup> Barnett and Scott, ‘Spaces of Opposition’, p. 2612. See also Cock and Fig, ‘The Impact of Globalisation on Environmental Politics in South Africa’.

<sup>134</sup> Quoted in Johnson, ‘State and Civil Society in Contemporary South Africa’, p. 228.

<sup>135</sup> Friedman, ‘South Africa’, p. 236 – 237.

<sup>136</sup> Johnson, ‘State and Civil Society in Contemporary South Africa’, p. 237. See also Habib, ‘State-Civil Society Relations in post-Apartheid South Africa’, p. 233.

transformation of global society requires alliances of progressives, both within and outside the state, especially where that state is popular.<sup>137</sup>

This conception of partnership and alliance replacing ‘rejectionist’ and critical politics is crucial to the governmental rationality of the ANC. The ANC view of protest politics is that “the people waged a difficult, costly, protracted and successful struggle to end and negate their role as a protest movement and to transform themselves into a united reconstruction and development brigade.”<sup>138</sup>

This view of the people as ‘a united reconstruction and development brigade’ is essential to understanding the ANC’s attitude to protests at the WSSD. The South African brand at the Summit was predicated on the portrayal of the country as a reconciled and peaceful society that had successfully negotiated the transition from divisive Apartheid to united ‘Rainbow Nation’. Since Apartheid was premised on the notion of essential racial differences, “the leitmotif of resistance politics was thus an emphasis on sameness”, with the result that the ANC displays “an inability to talk about the truly fragmented nature of the South African society and state.”<sup>139</sup> As Greenstein notes, “even today, that the people are composed of different groups, with sometimes overlapping and sometimes contradictory interests, which cannot be collapsed into a larger unity, is not a common notion in South African political discourse.”<sup>140</sup>

These conditions provide the context within which the ANC and the South African state responded to criticisms and protests during the Summit. The ANC, as Steffen Jensen has suggested, seems to have no language to deal with local political opponents and conflicts on a legitimate basis, and seeks to revert to the moral clarity of the anti-apartheid struggle in which “those who are with the ANC are, by definition, in favour of transformation, and those who are against the ANC are opposed.”<sup>141</sup> In this context, the ANC response to protest followed a number of lines. First, they were ridiculed as naive, and economically and politically illiterate. Secondly, they were criminalised as inherently violent and destructive. Thirdly,

<sup>137</sup> ANC, *Statement To The Global Civil Society Forum Of The World Summit On Sustainable Development*, 24/07/2002.

<sup>138</sup> Mbeki, ‘The Masses are not Blind’.

<sup>139</sup> Friedman, ‘South Africa’, p. 240; Jensen, ‘The Battlefield and the Prize’, p. 118.

<sup>140</sup> Greenstein, *State, Civil Society and the Reconfiguration of Power*, p. 15. See also J. Comaroff and J. L. Comaroff, ‘Naturing the Nation: Aliens, Apocalypse and the Postcolonial State’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 27, 3, (2001), pp. 627 – 651.

<sup>141</sup> Jensen, ‘The Battlefield and the Prize’, p. 107.

insinuations of foreign, counter-revolutionary influence were made. These reactions were not unique to the South African state, and indeed were common and recurring responses to protest by participants and organisers during the WSSD.

Protestors at the WSSD were condemned by Mbeki as aiming for the “collapse of the Summit”, and for being people who “do not want any discussion and negotiations.”<sup>142</sup> Critical voices were frequently dismissed as troublemakers, unhelpful elements and “just moaners.”<sup>143</sup> Similar allegations were made by other participants in the Summit, with one commentator attacking the irresponsibility of the international media for the way they “jumped on the Johannesburg bandwagon at the final fence and proceeded to report on an exhausted party of travellers with little regard for the journey they had been on.”<sup>144</sup> British Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott lashed out in the *New Statesman* at the “destructive criticism” of some press reports on the Summit, also arguing that whilst “some NGOs have done excellent work; others like to snipe from the sidelines” with the result that “criticism becomes corrosive rather than constructive.”<sup>145</sup> “Sustainable development requires partnership,” he re-iterated, and if “governments have to fight every inch of the way against cynical opposition as well as vested interests, such changes simply won’t happen.”<sup>146</sup>

Protestors at the WSSD were also often ridiculed for their naivety or irrelevance. In response to being asked about the importance of the social movements in 2002, one South African government advisor responded that “I don’t know the name of the director of the Landless People’s Movement. These social movements are not really taken seriously here, mainly because the issues they deal with don’t appear to be the key challenges confronting the country.”<sup>147</sup> ANC spokesperson Smuts Ngonyama described social movement activist Dennis Brutus as “a person who flies in and flies over whenever he wants. At best he is a protest activist. In South Africa we are more serious than that.”<sup>148</sup> The ANC was joined in its condemnation of the

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<sup>142</sup> T. Mbeki, ‘Reports on economy tell us we are on course’, *ANC Today*, 2, 35, 30-05/08-09/2002. See also ‘UN: Don’t let WSSD fail!’, *News 24* (SA), 10/08/2002.

<sup>143</sup> Interview with JP Louw, stakeholder relations in JOWSCO, (Midrand, 17/10/2006); A. Rawnsley, ‘Cynicism will end up costing the Earth’, *The Guardian* (UK), 01/09/2002.

<sup>144</sup> T. Middleton, ‘Editorial’, *Network 2002: Preparing for Earth Summit 2002*, 3, 7, (2002), p. 2.

<sup>145</sup> J. Prescott, ‘Don’t Snipe, We’re Getting There!’, *New Statesman* (UK), 09/09/2002.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> Interview with Goolam Abookbaker, Deputy Director-General of the ANC’s Policy Unit, quoted in Calland, *Anatomy of South Africa*, p. 248.

<sup>148</sup> Misbach, ‘New grouping sizes up ANC’, *The Sowetan* (SA).

protestors by the SACP, which branded them “infantile” and “irresponsible”.<sup>149</sup> *ANC Today* in September 2002 argued that “government economic policies are essentially correct, whatever our critics say to advance their political and ideological agendas”, and criticism was dismissed as the ranting of the “ultra-left.”<sup>150</sup> Environment Minister Valli Moosa later reflected that “to their discredit” the South African protestors “were completely incoherent”, and that the Greenpeace protest at Koeburg “was just frankly rich European kids behaviour.”<sup>151</sup>

As well as being cast as naive and foolish, protestors at the WSSD were commonly portrayed as violent, irresponsible and destructive.<sup>152</sup> *The Star* claimed that the aim of the social movements march on 31 August was “thuggery, disorder and damage to property.”<sup>153</sup> One environmental consultant pronounced that the marches were merely “flavour of the month. You could see rent-a-crowd in there ... There were people who were looking for causes, who were looking for excuses to go and smash up the street lamps.”<sup>154</sup> Media reports warned that there was “increasing concern in intelligence circles that militant groups will stop at nothing to disrupt the World Summit on Sustainable Development.”<sup>155</sup> Media and state discourses commonly credited the police with ensuring peace and order, in the face of the assumed inherent lawlessness of the protestors.<sup>156</sup> As a lawyer for the South African Police Service warned, “a large congregation of people has inherent dangers, and this means that it needs to be controlled and regulated properly by persons with the necessary skills and training.”<sup>157</sup> The assumptions underpinning these allegations are that ‘the people’ are inherently violent, whilst the state is inherently peaceful. This is a

<sup>149</sup> C. Kgosana *et al*, ‘NGO vows it won’t be cowed out of marching’, *The Star* (SA), 26/08/2002.

<sup>150</sup> Mbeki, ‘Reports on economy tell us we are on course’. See also J. Battersby and C. Phahlane, ‘Tight security as marchers take to roads’, *The Saturday Star*, (SA) 31/08/2002; Bond, *Talk Left, Walk Right*, pp. 159 – 160; J. Cronin, ‘Post-Apartheid South Africa: A Reply to John S. Saul’, *Monthly Review*, 54, 7 (2002); D. McKinley and A. Veriava, *Arresting Dissent: State Repression and Post-Apartheid Social Movements*, (Braamfontein; Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2005), p. 45.

<sup>151</sup> Turok, ‘Battle for the WSSD’, pp. 26 – 27.

<sup>152</sup> SMI, Press Release, 03/09/2002.

<sup>153</sup> Quoted by J. Duncan, *Another Journalism is Possible: Critical Challenges for the Media in South Africa*, Harold Wolpe Lecture delivered at UKZN, (30/10/2003).

<sup>154</sup> Interview with Arend Hoogervorst, environmental consultant with Eagle Environmental, (Durban, 13/12/2006).

<sup>155</sup> I. Lekota and M. Mafata, ‘Govt warns marchers: Militant groups will stop at nothing to disrupt the World Summit on Sustainable Development’, *The Sowetan* (SA), 27/08/2002.

<sup>156</sup> ‘Mother of all marches’, *News 24* (SA), 30/08/2002; “Peace will be enforced”, *The Sowetan* (SA), 31/08/2002; ‘Summit protesters warned’, *News 24* (SA), 25/08/2002; ‘Warning for summit “wreckers”’, *News 24* (SA), 27/08/2002.

<sup>157</sup> J. Meyer, ‘Police and the Regulation of Gatherings and Demonstrations: How Should Unauthorised Demonstrations be Managed? The WSSD as a case study’, in Ndung’u, *The Right to Dissent*, p. 81.

frequent trope of the reporting of protests, with examples including the official Summit history *Ten Days in Johannesburg* recording that on 31 August “a big contingent of SA Police Services and Defence Force staff ensured a peaceful demonstration.”<sup>158</sup> The possibility that the protestors might be committed to peaceful demonstration and that police action could incite violence is rarely considered.<sup>159</sup>

This attitude to protest occurred within a broader context in which critical social movements have often been criminalised in South Africa.<sup>160</sup> Activists claim that their marches are routinely denied permission, denying their constitutional right to freedom of expression through recourse to the *Regulation of Gatherings Act* (passed in 1993 during a period of intense civil unrest but never repealed or amended) and criminalising them for political reasons.<sup>161</sup> Activists complained about “systematic harassment and intimidation” by the National Intelligence Agency in the run-up to the WSSD.<sup>162</sup> On 17 August 2002 activists from the Soldiers’ Forum, an Anti-Privatisation Forum affiliate, were arrested for trying to travel to Cape Town to protest at Parliament against their unfair dismissal and failure of the state to pay their pensions. Whilst imprisoned they were allegedly threatened and subjected to tear gassings, assaults, and racial slurs. Seven had to be hospitalised. On 10 December

<sup>158</sup> Chasek and Sherman, *Ten Days in Johannesburg*, pp. 148 – 149. See also Battersby and Phahlane, ‘Tight security as marchers take to roads’, *The Saturday Star* (SA); Molele, ‘Pahad sent packing’, *The Sowetan Sunday World* (SA); T. Mtshali *et al.*, ‘Protests go off without a hitch’, *The Sunday Times* (SA), 01/10/2002; and Rohan, ‘Invasion of the would-be wealth-snatchers’, *The Star* (SA).

<sup>159</sup> Poor police preparation and handling of protestors was described by several interviewees, e.g. Teboho Mashota, APF Finance Administrator and SECC media liaison, (Johannesburg, 18/10/2006); Bheki Ntshalintshali, Deputy General Secretary COSATU, (Johannesburg, 04/10/2006); and Ahmed Veriava, SMI and Freedom of Expression Institute, (Durban, 02/12/2006). For a discussion of similarly provocative policing strategies in a European context, see F. Donson, G. Chesters, I. Welsh and A. Tickle, ‘Rebels with a Cause, Folk Devils without a Panic: Press jingoism, policing tactics and anti-capitalist protest in London and Prague’, *Internet Journal of Criminology*, (2004), pp. 1 – 31. More broadly, the increasing use of private security companies to handle protestors in South Africa is also of concern. McKinley and Veriava cite video footage which “shows members of Wozani Security, armed with crowbars, throwing rocks at protestors with little regard for established crowd control practices.” McKinley and Veriava, *Arresting Dissent*, p. 54.

<sup>160</sup> J. Beall, O. Crankshaw, and S. Parnell, ‘Victims, Villains and Fixers: The Urban Environment and Johannesburg’s Poor’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26, 4, (2000), pp. 833 – 855; Bond, *Unsustainable South Africa*, chapter 6; interview with Trevor Ngwane, SECC and APF, (Soweto, 28/09/2006).

<sup>161</sup> APF, *Struggle for Basic Services*, Video – directed and edited by Mohlo Magwaza, (2005); McKinley and Veriava, *Arresting Dissent*, p. 50; M. Seleane, ‘A Critical and Comparative Review of the Regulation of Gatherings Act’, in Ndung’u, *The Right to Dissent*, pp. 26 – 47.

<sup>162</sup> A. Everleth, ‘Criminalising Dissent: Experiences of the Landless People’s Movement and the National Land Committee during the WSSD’, in Ndung’u, *The Right to Dissent*, p. 87. See also interview with Samantha Hargreaves, Landless People’s Movement, (Johannesburg, 27/10/2006); McKinley, ‘Trying to “Kill” the Messenger’, p. 95; M. Merten, ‘NIA says it had no intent to harass NGOs’, *Mail & Guardian* (SA), 23–29/08/2002; interview with Trevor Ngwane, SECC and APF, (Soweto, 28/09/2006); and interview with Chippy Olver, Director General of DEAT and chairman of JOWSCO, (Johannesburg, 05/10/2006).

2002 Johannesburg Regional Magistrate's court dropped charges against all 93 soldiers.<sup>163</sup> On 21 August 4,000 landless people and activists marched in downtown Johannesburg where they were heavily supervised by police who eventually arrested 77, including National Land Committee co-ordinator Andile Mngxitama and SANGOCO President Zakes Hlatshwayo.<sup>164</sup> The 77 were detained for two days, and when they finally appeared in court after the WSSD all charges were dropped.<sup>165</sup> In the Summit aftermath, commentators questioned whether these incidents formed part of a deliberate strategy by South African authorities to minimise dissent. Jane Duncan, Director of the Freedom of Expression Institute, noted how

gung-ho arrests, followed by the dropping of charges, was to become a familiar pattern over the WSSD period, leading to accusations that the state was using wrongful arrests to get key activists off the streets to prevent them from causing 'trouble' over the WSSD period.<sup>166</sup>

She points out that "of the one hundred and ninety six people who were arrested in the run up to, and during the WSSD, all of them have had charges dropped against them."<sup>167</sup>

Summit protestors were also linked to terrorists, counter-revolutionaries and enemies of the state.<sup>168</sup> Mbeki alleged that the protestors "saw the WSSD as an opportunity for them to wage a struggle against our movement and government."<sup>169</sup> Sean Tshabalala, director of VIP protection for the South African police, was quoted by the media as saying that

we have learnt lessons from Seattle, Genoa and Davos. The same will not be allowed to happen. ... We are prepared for everything – airborne, sniper or mortar attacks, violent illegal protests, kidnappings, lunatic attacks or biological attacks like with anthrax.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> McKinley, 'Trying to "Kill" the Messenger', pp. 94 – 95.

<sup>164</sup> "'Jail won't stop the march": Arrest of US woman and 77 landless hardens activists' resolve', *The Citizen* (SA), 23/08/2002; 'Landless claim police brutality', *Mail & Guardian* (SA), 24/08/2002.

<sup>165</sup> Everleth, 'Criminalising Dissent', p. 89.

<sup>166</sup> Duncan, *Another Journalism is Possible*.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> J. Battersby, 'Summit protestor crackdown: Fears agitators may infiltrate legal marches', *The Saturday Star* (SA), 24/08/2002; 'Boeremag planned WSSD attack', *Die Burger* (SA), 14/11/2002; Bond, *Talk Left, Walk Right*, p. 158.

<sup>169</sup> Mbeki, 'South Africa Can Take Pride in World Summit'.

<sup>170</sup> 'Tough time for summit protesters', *News 24* (SA), 20/06/2002.

This demonisation of protest through association with the anti-globalisation movement and the 'Battle of Seattle' was common.<sup>171</sup> The Johannesburg Chief of Police noted in the aftermath of the WSSD that "one only needed to be reminded about the violent events that occurred in Seattle in 1999 and Genoa in 2001 to understand the sort of situation that confronted the country's security organs."<sup>172</sup> State officials apparently told the media "they were aware that professional agitators behind Seattle and last year's mayhem at the G8 summit in Genoa, Italy, were in the country."<sup>173</sup> This insinuation of foreign influence worked to de-legitimise and de-politicise protest by associating it with imperialist and anti-South African agendas.

The most detailed discussion of these alleged links was made in an article prior to the Summit by ANC advisor Michael Sachs. He alleged that "as we approach the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg later this year the Seattle movement will, in all likelihood, converge on our biggest city in a festival of dissent."<sup>174</sup> Among his concerns about the Seattle Movement was that it was manifested in a small "coterie" of activists located in Southern capitals, unconnected to popular and mass struggles, and funded by the North.<sup>175</sup> He clarified that "I do not mean to argue that the Seattle movement is inherently reactionary ... However, given its Northern origin, its diverse content and its amorphous form, Seattle's progressive credentials should not be taken for granted."<sup>176</sup> This raises problematic questions for Sachs.

Some have even argued that the rise of the NGO phenomena in the South, with its 'anti-statist' overtones and dependence on foreign sources of funds, itself forms part of the project of imperialism and neo-liberalism. Even if we do not accept this 'worst case scenario', the concept [of] 'civil society' is not without ideological and political implications. Sometimes it is devoid of relation to the actual histories and institutional landscapes of the societies in which it is deployed.<sup>177</sup>

Sachs also expressed concerns with the anti-statism and the anti-developmentalism of the Seattle movement and environmentalism more generally, and pointed out how

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<sup>171</sup> Interview with JP Louw, stakeholder relations in JOWSCO, (Midrand, 17/10/2006); Turok, 'Battle for the WSSD', p. 29.

<sup>172</sup> C. Ngcobo, 'Local Authorities and the Regulation of Assemblies and Demonstrations', in Ndung'u, *The Right to Dissent*, p. 76.

<sup>173</sup> 'Protesters to ignore warnings', *News 24 (SA)*, 26/08/2002.

<sup>174</sup> Sachs, 'The Seattle Movement in Johannesburg'.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

both directly contradict the National Democratic Revolution.<sup>178</sup> Well-written and often nuanced, Sachs' paper nevertheless both caricatures and homogenises the so-called 'Seattle Movement'. Yet it is the repeated insinuation that protests at the WSSD were stimulated by foreign agitation rather than 'real South African grievances' that provides the discursive context for the violence of the state response.

The most revealing ANC response to the protestors was contained in their statement on the day following the clash between the candle-lit marchers and the police.

[W]e wish to roundly condemn the actions of those factions (both local and international) for whom these democratic victories, so recently won after so much sacrifice, are mere fodder in the irresponsible pursuit of confrontation and anarchy. We know well from our own struggle that such mindless violence is the practice of at best the naive, and at worst the agent provocateur.<sup>179</sup>

The claim that local protestors are being naively led astray by international agitators is insinuated here, and the protestors are uniformly labelled irresponsible and anti-democratic. They are portrayed as troublemakers rather than having any serious grievances and it is explicitly argued that such protests are detrimental to the struggle of progressive forces in the new South Africa. The defining image of the marchers on 31 August was that created by *The Sunday Times*.

War veterans from Zimbabwe, ultra-leftists, disgruntled former soldiers, right-wingers, international anarchists, Palestinian and Israeli campaigners and hackers are all coming to Johannesburg this week hoping to grab the spotlight during the World Summit on Sustainable Development. South African intelligence services have picked up plots to 'shut down' the summit. But government security services have thrown a ring of steel around Johannesburg to ensure that potentially violent disruption and sabotage is speedily diffused ... Disgruntled former SA soldiers, who have been campaigning to get their jobs back, have also been identified as a potential danger since they have military training.<sup>180</sup>

The responses to protests during the WSSD therefore combined a wide range of tactics to marginalise and discredit them, including presenting them as naive, criminal, and even traitorous. Such discursive framings stem from what Neocosmos describes as the "state-defined consensual discourse", which means that

<sup>178</sup> Ibid. See also ANC, *Statement To The Global Civil Society Forum*.

<sup>179</sup> ANC, *Statement on the WSSD*.

<sup>180</sup> R. Munusamy, 'The summit of all fears', *The Sunday Times* (SA), 25/08/2002.



criticisms of the ANC/state can be labelled as beyond the national consensus, as either the utterances of racists or ex-racists if such criticisms are made by Whites, as disloyal or narrow egotistical remarks if made by Blacks, or simply as foreign-inspired.<sup>181</sup>

Those protestors at the WSSD who refused to accept dominant discourses of consensus, unity and partnership were accordingly placed outside the domain of legitimate politics. This positioning has had serious consequences for particular groups, and for broader power relationships within South Africa post-WSSD.

### *The political effects of protest at the WSSD*

Determining the explicit effects of protests such as those in Johannesburg in terms of precise causal chains is full of methodological and empirical complications.<sup>182</sup> Rather than attempt to attribute precise causal significance to particular actions, this chapter argues that the protests and clashes at the WSSD contributed to the pressure on Summit delegates to retain some commitment to multilateral (Type I) outcomes, and that without them it is more likely that the voluntary partnerships would have had an even higher profile. Proponents of partnerships within the UN expressed regret that negotiations were conducted in a climate of suspicion of the US and the neo-liberal agenda, with the result that the partnership approach was “re-shaped” into something “less dynamic and aggressive than had been envisaged when they started.”<sup>183</sup> The protests contributed to this climate, and were an encouragement to negotiators who wanted to press for stronger targets and timeframes and worked to discourage businesses from trumpeting new partnerships too enthusiastically.<sup>184</sup> Yet the effects of the protests were also significant in terms of their effects on the evolution of South African civil society and the attitude of state institutions toward particular groups.

<sup>181</sup> Neocosmos, ‘Rethinking Politics in Southern Africa Today’, p. 85.

<sup>182</sup> Della Porta and Diana note difficulties including the attribution of fixed interests to particular movements and actors, the attribution of causal credit to particular actors, the complexity of modern political and sociological phenomena, and the question of timescale. Della Porta and Diana, *Social Movements*, chapter 9.

<sup>183</sup> Interview with Diane Quarless, Vice Chair and Rapporteur on the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee for the WSSD, and co-Chair of Partnership Initiatives, (New York, 17/10/2007).

<sup>184</sup> C. Norris, ‘Partnerships for Sustainable Development: The Role of Type II Agreements’, in Kalhauge *et al*, *Global Challenges*, p. 227.

In the Summit aftermath, commentators asked whether the adversarial relationship between the governing party, police and protestors “was a taste of things to come.”<sup>185</sup> In hindsight Michael Sachs conceded that “there were certainly serious problems and violations that took place from the side of the police” at the WSSD, but rejected suggestions that the ANC had become the “new oppressors” of social movements in South Africa.<sup>186</sup> Yet the WSSD signified, and provided a context for, gradually increasing levels of violence, repression and intimidation of critical social movements aligned with the SMI, as well as striking workers and trade unionists.<sup>187</sup> In their discussion of one case among many, McKinley and Veriava record the death of 67 year-old Johannesburg water activist, Emily Lengola, who was shot in her shack in early 2003 by unknown gunmen. They go on to observe that whilst activists

did not publicly claim that Emily’s murder was the work of the ANC and/or ANC-aligned individuals within the community, they did point to the fact that the murder took place in an ANC-created ‘atmosphere in which APF activists are often viewed as “enemies of the state” and the governing party, the ANC’.<sup>188</sup>

One activist described the situation as “a low intensity civil war.”<sup>189</sup> Roger Southall agrees that the government’s response to protests since 2004 has been at times “heavy-handed”, justified by “dark hints that the violence was being orchestrated by sinister forces.”<sup>190</sup>

This heightened atmosphere has contributed to “serious organisational changes” for many social movements in the aftermath of the WSSD, who have struggled to cope with the arrests of their leaders, fear and intimidation, lawsuits, and the nervousness of international donors and funders.<sup>191</sup> Talk of “stasis” or “an

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<sup>185</sup> J. Duncan, ‘A Flash in the Pan? The Relevance of the WSSD for Freedom of Expression’, in Ndung’u, *The Right to Dissent*, p. 108.

<sup>186</sup> Michael Sachs at the ‘Right to Dissent’ workshop on 14/11/2002, quoted by Duncan, ‘A Flash in the Pan?’, p. 101.

<sup>187</sup> A. Desai and R. Pithouse, *But We Were Thousands: Dispossession, Resistance, Repossession and Repression in Mandela Park*, (Durban; Centre for Civil Society, 2003); T. Ngwane, ‘Sparks in the Township’, *New Left Review*, 22, (2003), pp. 37 – 56; interview with Bheki Ntshalintshali, Deputy General Secretary COSATU, (Johannesburg, 04/10/2006).

<sup>188</sup> McKinley and Veriava, *Arresting Dissent*, p. 41.

<sup>189</sup> Interview with Trevor Ngwane, SECC and APF, (Soweto, 28/09/2006).

<sup>190</sup> R. Southall, ‘Introduction: The ANC State, more dysfunctional than developmental?’, in S. Buhlungu, J. Daniel, R. Southall and J. Lutchman (eds), *State of the Nation: South Africa 2007*, (Cape Town; HSRC Press, 2007), p. 13.

<sup>191</sup> Dwyer, *The World Conference Against Racism and The World Summit On Sustainable Development*, p. 30.

interregnum” in the social movements has become common.<sup>192</sup> Organisations affected most seriously have included SANGOCO, the EJNF, the Rural Development Services Network, the National Land Committee and the Landless People’s Movement.<sup>193</sup> The SMI has struggled to keep open the space it created in 2002, and as a network structure it has been affected by the problems faced by other movements.<sup>194</sup> At a meeting in 2005 activists highlighted “the fact that some of the social movements that were part of the formation of the SMI in 2002 face serious political and organisational challenges. ... Some are riddled with internal struggles around issues of resources and leadership.”<sup>195</sup>

The Landless People’s Movement has been particularly hard-hit by their exclusion from legitimate politics since the WSSD. In 2002 it was one of the fastest growing and most influential movements, and it brought thousands of rural members and activists to Johannesburg to draw attention to the slow pace of land redistribution.<sup>196</sup> Based in the Shareworld complex, they organised a ‘Week of the Landless’, and received a great deal of media attention as well as taking a prominent role in the march on 31 August.<sup>197</sup> However, the strains of such a large event “brought to a head simmering tensions between different political trajectories”, and fears of National Intelligence Agency infiltration soured relationships within the movement.<sup>198</sup> According to a former organiser, “there was a deep conflict within the camp ... there were accusations of people carrying guns, others were going to be assassinated ... The future of the movement was at stake.”<sup>199</sup> The divisions within the movement, exacerbated by the pressures of a major international Summit, combined with the impacts of the arrests of members and leadership and increased police harassment meant that “for the LPM [the WSSD] was a disastrous event, in terms of its future.”<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Hlatshwayo, *Secretary’s Report*, pp. 6 – 7; interview with Ahmed Veriava, SMI and Freedom of Expression Institute, (Durban, 02/12/2006).

<sup>193</sup> Dwyer, *The World Conference Against Racism and The World Summit On Sustainable Development*; interview with Dale McKinley, SMI Press Secretary, (Johannesburg, 23/10/2006); Munnik and Wilson, *The World Comes to One Country*, p. 73; interview with Richard Worthington, Earthlife Africa, (Johannesburg, 31/10/2006).

<sup>194</sup> Interview with Teboho Mashota, APF Finance Administrator and SECC media liaison, (Johannesburg, 18/10/2006).

<sup>195</sup> SMI, *Report of the 2005 Annual Meeting*, 09/12/2005, (unpublished).

<sup>196</sup> Mngxitama, ‘National Land Committee’.

<sup>197</sup> S. Greenberg, ‘The Landless People’s Movement and the Failure of Post-Apartheid Land Reform’, in Ballard *et al*, *Voices of Protest*, pp. 133 – 153.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid*, p. 138.

<sup>199</sup> Interview with Samantha Hargreaves, Landless People’s Movement, (Johannesburg, 27/10/2006).

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid*.

The decline of the EJNF post-2002 has also been a great disappointment for many environment and development activists in South Africa, since it demonstrated a remarkable ability to synthesise ‘red’ and ‘green’ agendas into a ‘brown’ form of environmental justice that resonated with historically disparate communities. Described by Cock as potentially the “organisational expression of a coherent, comprehensive environmental justice movement in South Africa”, she also noted how “participation in the WSSD was clearly a radicalising experience for EJNF”, and “as a key component of the Social Movements Indaba, relations with the ANC and the post-apartheid state have become increasingly confrontational.”<sup>201</sup> Whilst it played a leading role in the social movements in 2002, since then personnel problems, internal struggles and donor mistrust have meant it has virtually “imploded” and has “to all extents and purposes ceased to exist.”<sup>202</sup> Whilst it is clear that the WSSD was by no means the primary causal factor in the decline of the EJNF, it was certainly contributory, and the tensions of 2002 threw a spotlight on broader conflicts within the South African polity.<sup>203</sup>

In contrast to the problems experienced by many of these more radical social movements, many of the leading NGOs which protested at the WSSD have not faced the same degree of marginalisation, harassment and organisational decline.<sup>204</sup> As well as very different organisational structures and institutional resources, this is linked to the fact that, as Barnett and Scott have shown,

deliberative environmental governance in South Africa puts a premium on norms of participation, conciliation, and consensus. Any departure from these norms is looked on as obstructive, and even as an index of the lack of legitimacy of the [social movements] who adopt such adversarial activism.<sup>205</sup>

Groups like WESSA, Earthlife Africa and GroundWork were better able to negotiate a balance between critique and engagement at the Summit. As such their conduct draws on the models provided by international advocacy and protest groups like

<sup>201</sup> Cock, ‘Connecting the Red, Brown and Green’, pp. 207 – 208.

<sup>202</sup> Email communication with Saliem Fakir, director of IUCN-SA, (27/10/2006); and interview with David Fig, academic and consultant, (Johannesburg, 19/09/2006).

<sup>203</sup> Other factors have contributed to the decline of certain NGOs post-2002, including donor withdrawal and personnel shifts to government and industry. Cock and Fig, ‘The Impact of Globalisation on Environmental Politics in South Africa’; and interview with Richard Worthington, Earthlife Africa, (Johannesburg, 31/10/2006).

<sup>204</sup> Email communication with Saliem Fakir, director of IUCN-SA, (27/10/2006); interview with John Ledger, Endangered Wildlife Trust, (Johannesburg, 13/09/2006); interview with Mashile Phalame, Earthlife Africa, (Johannesburg, 18/09/2006).

<sup>205</sup> Barnett and Scott, ‘Spaces of Opposition’, p. 2627.

Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth.<sup>206</sup> Greenpeace clashed with police in both Bali and Cape Town, and used the Summit as a stage for high profile condemnations and criticisms of the way in which sustainable development was being framed and the manner in which UN summits were conducted. They described the *Plan of Implementation* as “a sad reflection of the lowest common denominator as dictated by the US”, and supported the position of the SMI in “denouncing the outcome of the WSSD.”<sup>207</sup> Yet at the same time they lobbied continually within the UN, advising and participating in debates and multi-stakeholder forums; they supported the EU declaration on renewable energy; and they held a joint meeting with business lobby groups to call for government action on climate change, “shelving our differences on other issues on this occasion.”<sup>208</sup> The final statement by the Third World Network at the WSSD (with whom both Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth have many links) was that “the Summit had constituted a great experience for the cooperation of many like-minded NGOs and common citizenry coming together in the interests of sustainable development”, a clear affirmation of the discourse of partnership and consensus on which the Summit depended.<sup>209</sup> Despite their criticisms and protests, these groups could not reject the Summit entirely since it was a forum in which they were deeply implicated, and on which their identity was predicated. As Munnik and Wilson observed, “for NGOs accredited to the UN the WSSD was part of their reason for being. They had the technical skill, experience, and knowledge of both issues and process to participate.”<sup>210</sup>

Similarly, South African NGOs like WESSA managed to successfully negotiate a balance between creative protest and staying within the acceptable limits of dissent. They concluded post-Summit that, notwithstanding the disappointments of the official outcomes, “WESSA gained substantially from the Summit which was well worth the considerable effort that went into it.”<sup>211</sup> WESSA have traditionally been regarded as a green organisation more interested in wildlife and landscapes than social justice, relying on their scientific expertise to create a largely technical and

<sup>206</sup> P. Wapner, ‘In Defence of Banner Hangers: The Dark Green Politics of Greenpeace’, in B. R. Taylor (ed.), *Ecological Resistance Movements: The Global Emergence of Radical and Popular Environmentalism*, (Albany; SUNY, 1995), pp. 300 – 314.

<sup>207</sup> Appolis, ‘The Political Significance of August 31’, p. 10; R. Parmentier, *Lessons from Johannesburg: What is the Future for UN Summits*, Greenpeace International, (10/09/2002).

<sup>208</sup> Greenpeace and WBCSD, *Call for Action*, joint statement, (28/08/2002).

<sup>209</sup> UN, *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, p. 117.

<sup>210</sup> Munnik and Wilson, *The World Comes to One Country*, p. 11.

<sup>211</sup> L. McDaid, *WESSA WSSD Project, Final Report*, 31/10/2002, (unpublished), p. 2.

conservationist niche. At the WSSD they engaged with the partnership and corporate social responsibility discourses, suggesting principles for sustainable partnerships and citing examples of their own successful projects.<sup>212</sup> However, they also made an effort to engage with brown and red agendas, participating in the Biopiracy Summit and expressing their fears that partnerships might lead to the “corporatisation/privatisation of environmental and social resources.”<sup>213</sup> Their attitudes on global trade, biodiversity, and the privatisation of basic resources were in line with many of the social movement protestors at the Summit, and they actively sought “to be more clearly seen in solidarity with those sectors which are anti-privatisation.”<sup>214</sup>

Yet the prospects for closer green and brown linkages were damaged by tensions during the civil society process and the post-WSSD decline of the EJNF. During 2001 the Civil Society Secretariat published a T-shirt with a cartoon on it “showing the CEO driving a taxi to the Summit and leaving behind a butterfly-loving Green” which provoked anger at the “the crude representation and marginalisation of the greens.”<sup>215</sup> There was also broader resentment at the prominence of some environmental groups at the IUCN centre next door to the main Summit venue. It was advertised as

‘across the road from where business is meeting and five minutes walk from where government is meeting’, leading to the caustic comment that they were also a 45 minutes ride from where the rest of the NGOs were and a world away from the issues of poverty and development that the summit was supposed to be about.<sup>216</sup>

These tensions are familiar elements of environmental politics in South Africa, but they also echoed discursive tensions within the WSSD over issues like common but differentiated responsibilities and precaution where environmental concerns were increasingly separated from economic and social agendas.

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<sup>212</sup> A. Boonzaaier, ‘Coastcare: Working for the Coast. Lessons for the sustainability of partnerships’, *African Wildlife*, 56, 3, (2002), pp. 30 – 31; and WESSA, ‘WESSA’s View on Partnerships for Implementation’, p. 13.

<sup>213</sup> WESSA, ‘WESSA’s View on Partnerships for Implementation’, p. 13.

<sup>214</sup> McDaid, *WESSA WSSD Project*, p. 19; email communication with Andy Gubb, WESSA-Western Cape, (18/09/2006).

<sup>215</sup> Munnik and Wilson, *The World Comes to One Country*, p. 30; and appendix B, image #7. Amongst different interviewees there were completely opposing views on whether the greens had been sidelined or snubbed, and if they had then whether this was justified or resented. Opinions on this vary strongly. Among those who denied that the greens were sidelined were Bryan Ashe, Dale McKinley and Richard Sherman, but contrary views were expressed by Saliem Fakir, John Ledger, Richard Worthington, Jessica Wilson, Bheki Ntshalintshali and Bobby Peek.

<sup>216</sup> Munnik and Wilson, *The World Comes to One Country*, p. 62.

The environmental justice vision of sustainable development in South Africa is primarily articulated by more critical NGOs and community movements such as Earthlife Africa, GroundWork and the SDCEA. These groups have been able to use moments like the WSSD fairly successfully in order to disrupt and contest dominant framings of sustainable development, as well engaging with more conventional deliberative structures.<sup>217</sup> As Barnett and Scott have argued, such groups engage in protests and activism “to shift the parameters of inclusive forums and deliberative procedures”, as well as “to maintain their own coherence and perform their legitimacy to their constituent memberships and broader publics.”<sup>218</sup> This entails a delicate balancing act between the development of greater scientific and technical expertise at the same time as recourse to “forms of dramaturgical protest.”<sup>219</sup> GroundWork Director Bobby Peek explained that “in terms of resistance, the process is multifaceted”, and “being able to link the Friends of the Earth International ... with the much more community based organisations, link the Greenpeaces, the WWFs, to hardcore struggles on the ground – I would like to say that that is where our success lies.”<sup>220</sup> A similar attitude was articulated by Earthlife Africa’s Richard Worthington, who noted that “we’ve always been comfortable with an inside-outside strategy, whereby we work with groups who find the formal process inadequate, while at the same time trying to influence the formal process.”<sup>221</sup>

Overall, therefore, the WSSD constructed sustainable development in terms of partnerships and consensus and legitimate political actors were expected to participate responsibly, balancing this with the need to employ “the repertoires of adversarial activism” in order to perform their legitimacy to local communities.<sup>222</sup> Whilst some groups “proved themselves to be quite agile”, others became locked into an oppositional stance which eventually threatened their political existence.<sup>223</sup> The proliferation of protest at the WSSD contributed to a growing suspicion and impatience with civil society organisations within the ANC and the South African state, and according to Richard Worthington,

<sup>217</sup> Interview with Bobby Peek, Director of Groundwork, (Durban, 07/12/2006).

<sup>218</sup> Barnett and Scott, ‘Spaces of Opposition’, p. 2619.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid, p. 2622. See also S. Peek, ‘Doublespeak in Durban: Mondi, Waste Management and the struggles of the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance’, in McDonald, *Environmental Justice in South Africa*, pp. 202 – 219.

<sup>220</sup> Interview with Bobby Peek, Director of Groundwork, (Durban, 07/12/2006).

<sup>221</sup> Interview with Richard Worthington, Earthlife Africa, (Johannesburg, 31/10/2006).

<sup>222</sup> Barnett and Scott, ‘Spaces of Opposition’, p. 2622.

<sup>223</sup> Email communication with Saliem Fakir, director of IUCN-SA, (27/10/2006).

I think government has become more dismissive of civil society ... I don't know if WSSD was the main thing about it, but I suspect that it played a role, in that civil society didn't play a supportive role around WSSD, or even one that could be seen to be critically constructive – it was just a mess. So I think a lot more of the public participation processes are going through the motions.<sup>224</sup>

In 2006 DEAT acknowledged that “since the 1994 transition in South Africa, the relationship between the state and civil society, while still complementary, has gradually become more confrontational and less complementary.”<sup>225</sup> Sustainable development in South Africa is increasingly reflecting broader global trends and is turning to private sector partners rather than uncooperative and dissenting NGOs. For Greenstein, “government’s focus has been on forming partnerships with the business sector, and civil society organisations have been relegated to the role of potential training providers or watchdogs, rather than partners in service delivery.”<sup>226</sup> In a study of development partnerships in the rural water sector in South Africa, Galvin and Habib note that “local government officials argue that they prefer to use the private sector as a conduit for delivery.”<sup>227</sup>

The increasing preference for private sector partners is in part a reflection of their greater willingness to act as cooperative and technically proficient partners. Reflecting their new-found prominence, as David Fig has noted, South African firms have “used important global moments (Rio, WSSD) to set up irresistible notions of partnership, accommodation, win–win situations, synthesis and compromise.”<sup>228</sup> The experience of protest at the WSSD suggests that legitimate political actors are required to engage in these discourses of responsible partnership. Engaging can create spaces for more creative forms of protest and adversarial activism, but those who find this balance impossible or unpalatable are likely to be marginalised, repressed and excluded from sustainable development.

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<sup>224</sup> Interview with Richard Worthington, Earthlife Africa, (Johannesburg, 31/10/2006).

<sup>225</sup> DEAT, *People, Planet, Prosperity: A Strategic Framework for Sustainable Development in South Africa*, Draft Discussion Document for Public Comment, (29/09/2006), p. 57.

<sup>226</sup> Greenstein, *State, Civil Society and the Reconfiguration of Power*, p. 25.

<sup>227</sup> Galvin and Habib, ‘The Politics of Decentralisation and Donor Funding’, p. 880.

<sup>228</sup> D. Fig, ‘Manufacturing Amnesia: Corporate Social Responsibility in South Africa’, *International Affairs*, 81, 3, (2005), p. 617.



## Conclusion

Most accounts of summits concentrate on the diplomatic negotiations or the conduct of official participants. As the previous chapters have shown, these are both important elements of the way sustainable development is governed. Yet summits are also increasingly the sites of protests or counter-conducts against dominant ways of governing global politics. As Lipschutz notes, “in recent years, the annual gatherings of Western political leaders, global corporate executives, and international financial institutions have not been complete without a crowd in the streets and a parallel conference down the road.”<sup>229</sup> Rather than writing such protests off as marginal or merely theatrical, this chapter has argued that they are both important subversions and challenges to existing modes of rule, as well as a central element of the theatre of modern summitry.<sup>230</sup>

Without the protests and clashes at the WSSD it is possible that the Summit outcomes would have been even more thoroughly committed to voluntary partnerships rather than negotiated multilateral regulations. The protests were an encouragement to delegates who wanted to press for stronger targets and timeframes, and worked to discourage businesses from trumpeting new partnerships too enthusiastically. As such they disrupted and destabilised the discourses of partnership, unity and consensus which the Summit organisers, hosts and participants sought to create. The WSSD itself was represented as a space ‘above politics’ in which the global community could join in partnership to achieve sustainable development, and in so doing learn from the example of South Africa and the miracle of its peaceful transition and reconciliation. By drawing attention to examples of extreme poverty, environmental degradation, social inequality and injustice – in short, to unsustainable development – protestors at the Summit contested these representations, re-articulating the relationship between the global and the local in innovative ways. Whilst scientific forms of knowledge were both affirmed and contested through protests on issues like climate change and biodiversity, similar communicative forms of knowledge relying on advertising and branding were mobilised by the protestors as were employed by the Summit participants and organisers. Although many protestors

<sup>229</sup> Lipschutz, *Globalization, Governmentality and Global Politics*, p. 1.

<sup>230</sup> This is in contrast to the way that Chatterjee and Finger, for example, interpreted the Rio Summit as representing “the end of protest”, despite a march of 50,000 people. Chatterjee and Finger, *The Earth Brokers*, p. 101.

at the WSSD demanded more interventionist government and tougher targets and multilateral agreements, others chose to reject these mechanisms by marching on the streets and attempting to construct a binary, confrontational view of politics which contested dominant discourses of partnership and consensus.

Approaching these protests from a Foucauldian governmentality perspective resists accepting these stark divisions between reformists and revolutionaries however. Rather it shows how the protests can be seen as ‘counter-conducts’, deeply implicated in the techniques and strategies of government whilst also critiquing and subverting governmental rationalities. As such, whilst refusing to see the WSSD protests as ‘pure resistance’, this perspective highlights the ways in which they consciously politicised sustainable development and summitry. By refusing to participate in peaceful, deliberative politics, instead choosing to march on the streets of Johannesburg and disrupt the WSSD, these protests represented more conflictual and agonistic rationalities which stressed the importance of dissent and conflict in democratic politics.<sup>231</sup> They contested the boundaries of what counted as politics at the Summit, and demonstrated that the streets of Johannesburg were just as important political spaces as those inside the Sandton Convention Centre. The effects of the protests cannot be limited to the influence they had on the negotiators. Rather, as Desai notes with respect to South African community movements, they “challenged the very boundaries of what for a short while after the demise of the apartheid state was seen exclusively as ‘politics’.”<sup>232</sup>

In so doing, however, many of the movements who protested in Johannesburg came up against a dominant discourse with a strongly consensual view of sustainable development. In the context of a Summit held in South Africa by a government with particularly centrist and authoritarian attitudes, many of the counter-conducts found themselves excluded from the domain of ‘legitimate’ politics. The challenge they posed to discourses of partnership, unity and consensus resulted in the limits to techniques of government through freedom and at a distance being exposed, as the sovereign and disciplinary power of the South African state intervened. For groups like the Landless People’s Movement, the EJNF and the SMI, the WSSD legacy was one of organisational turmoil. The message the WSSD promoted was that there is no

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<sup>231</sup> Mouffe, *On the Political*; M. Walzer, *Politics and Passion: Toward a More Egalitarian Liberalism*, (New Haven; Yale University Press, 2004); Young, ‘Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy’.

<sup>232</sup> Desai, ‘Neoliberalism and Resistance in South Africa’, p. 8.

role in the politics of sustainable development for those who refuse to engage in cooperative partnerships.

On the other hand, groups like Greenpeace, Earthlife Africa, GroundWork and WESSA were able to negotiate the balance between critique and cooperation at the WSSD more successfully. Their conduct confirms the resilience of forms of advanced liberal government. These actors are not passive objects of rule and they assert their freedom in actively shaping and manipulating the forms, languages and techniques of sustainable development. Ultimately however, they are prepared to engage with cooperative and exemplary forms of government through partnership, since if they refuse their very existence as political actors is placed in doubt.

# Conclusion:

## Sustainable Development in the twenty-first century

*For the real summit ... keep climbing.*

*Printed on T-shirts during the WSSD*

The 2002 WSSD came ten years after Rio and fifteen after the Brundtland Report, and stands as a landmark in the evolution of the discourse of sustainable development. This thesis has used the Johannesburg Summit as a lens through which to consider the status and role of sustainable development discourse at the start of the twenty-first century. Yet it has also sought to broaden conventional discussions of the concept which have largely remained rooted in liberal institutionalist frameworks in order to question the role which summits themselves play in global politics, and how sustainable development is implicated in contemporary formations of advanced liberal rule. Drawing attention to the theatricality and performative dimension of the WSSD also focuses the analysis on the importance of protests and dissent. Highlighting these conflicts and the ways in which they subverted and reinforced power relationships, and their ramifications for the organisations involved, is part of an explicit project of re-politicising understandings of sustainable development and summitry.

This ethos of politicisation emerges from a Foucauldian perspective on power, discourse and government. By regarding power and knowledge as intimately connected, freedom as a technique of modern government, and rule as being exercised through extensive sites and actors, Foucault argued that ‘the political’ extends beyond the state and formal institutions to include the multiplicity of techniques by which the conduct of conduct is attempted.<sup>1</sup> Sustainable development therefore is not simply an objective or instrumental concept for reconciling human development with environmental limits, but is a constellation of rationalities and practices which have

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<sup>1</sup> Foucault, ‘The Subject and Power’, p. 345.

political effects. Likewise summits are not merely neutral institutional techniques for facilitating consensus, nor only sites of material conflict and inter-state *realpolitik*. They are also assemblages of power and knowledge which work to govern global politics in particular ways.

A Foucauldian perspective also seeks to avoid some of the pitfalls of an ideological interpretation of sustainable development which, although being more explicitly politicised in terms of focussing on power relations, ultimately reduces an understanding of sustainable development to a legitimising or mystifying veneer for ‘business-as-normal’ and the capitalist exploitation of people and nature for profit. Whilst this is an important corrective to seeing sustainable development as a neutral and technical concept, understanding it as a Foucauldian discourse draws attention to many political effects which cannot be reduced to material exploitation by pre-constituted actors and interests. The discourse of sustainable development has changed the way we think about environment and development, shifted understandings of the role and nature of business, and restructured the division of responsibilities between states, international institutions and civil society. It is more than just “polite meaningless words.”<sup>2</sup>

Viewing sustainable development from a governmentality perspective highlights the productive effects of the discourse as it works to establish certain fields of visibility, authorises and deploys particular regimes of knowledge, is manifested in specific practices and techniques, and produces certain political actors, agents and subjects. As constituted through texts, actors and moments like *Our Common Future*, the Rio Earth Summit and *Agenda 21*, sustainable development inaugurated a global vision of government in which all aspects of social, economic and environmental life were to be brought under the explicit government of authorised experts and managers.<sup>3</sup> Environmental scientists, resource conservationists, security experts and ‘green’ economists were empowered as legitimate and necessary authorities for the implementation of sustainable development. The discourse was manifested in a diversity of techniques and technologies, but particularly prominent were the mobilisation of monitoring and surveillance technologies; public participation techniques which facilitated the insertion of major groups into the practice of sustainable development; and the negotiation of international conventions, regimes

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<sup>2</sup> Middleton and O’Keefe, *Redefining Sustainable Development*, chapter two.

<sup>3</sup> Brundtland, *Our Common Future*; UN, *Agenda 21*.

and declarations through multilateral processes of diplomacy at UN summits. The disciplinary and managerial rationality of these articulations of sustainable development has been highlighted by Luke, who argues that the discourse has brought the whole of human and natural life under the governmentalising ambit of states and world-watching NGOs who have pacified the radical environmental critique in the interests of stabilising and reproducing the capitalist mode of production.<sup>4</sup>

Yet, important as they are, such interpretations of sustainable development as managerial, technocratic and disciplinary forms of eco-governmentality have nevertheless underestimated its productive and participatory dimensions, and the ways in which ‘sustainable subjects’ have been produced.<sup>5</sup> These dimensions have been present since *Our Common Future* and *Agenda 21*, yet it was at the WSSD that sustainable development became most clearly re-orientated towards partnerships and advanced liberal governmentality. Chapter three of the thesis demonstrated how the negotiations at the WSSD can be interpreted in terms of competing rationalities of government: specifically the disciplinary government of the Global Deal proposals versus the advanced liberal government of the Type II partnerships. The Danish and South African proposals for a new Global Deal were located firmly within the Brundtland vision of sustainable development as a global project in which states, aided by a chorus of supporting actors and coordinated by the UN, would actively manage social, environmental and economic issues in order to secure a more equitable, secure and sustainable planetary future. In contrast, the US and their allies advocated a partnership-based model of sustainable development which relied upon voluntary partnerships agreed bilaterally between equal partners with the capacity to implement them, including states, businesses, civil society actors and international institutions. These techniques of power have not replaced sovereign or disciplinary forms, but rather re-articulated them within constellations of advanced liberal government. Whilst the specific future of CSD-accredited Type II partnerships is unclear, as a broader rationality of government the partnership approach is increasingly dominant and the WSSD inaugurated what Kofi Annan has called “an era of partnerships” in sustainable development discourse.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Luke, ‘Environmentality as Green Governmentality’; Luke, ‘On Environmentality’.

<sup>5</sup> Agrawal, *Environmentality*; Goldman, ‘Constructing an Environmental State’; Oels, ‘Rendering Climate Change Governable’.

<sup>6</sup> Annan, *Press Conference by UN Secretary-General*.

The particular way sustainable development was framed at the WSSD had a number of effects. By forcefully asserting that the primary challenge for achieving sustainable development was the eradication of poverty, the WSSD placed the economic pillar at the heart of sustainable development to an unprecedented degree. However, whilst the Global Deal approach took a broad view of poverty as economic inequality and social disempowerment and highlighted their structural causes, the partnerships approach was based on the assumption that compartmentalised action on specific and individual issues was sufficient for the implementation of sustainable development. Social, environmental and economic issues were increasingly regarded separately, with discussions on common but differentiated responsibilities and the precautionary principle limited to environmental issues. ‘Global’ issues such as the Iraq war, climate change and international trade were deferred to other bodies and forums. This threatened segregation of the sustainable development agenda is dangerous to the degree it suggests that isolated action on environmental issues can ignore social, economic, and political considerations.

This compartmentalisation is most evident in the rise of “supply driven rather than demand driven” partnerships.<sup>7</sup> Such *ad hoc* instruments risk the marginalisation of vulnerable issues and regions, particular those that are less amenable to technological and measurable ‘solutions’. The need to demonstrate auditable success militates against complex structural problems (such as climate change, poverty and gender inequality) in favour of isolated technical solutions (such as carbon credits and trading, technology transfers and quotas for major group participation). This rationality of government prioritises actors with particular instrumental resources, expertise and willingness to cooperate, as opposed to more democratic, equitable or sustainable attributes.

Perhaps the greatest danger posed by a market-driven, voluntary approach to sustainable development however is its potential for de-politicisation. Whereas *Our Common Future* recognised that “there are usually winners and losers” when it comes to solving environment and development problems, the Johannesburg *Plan of Implementation* instead stressed that “the outcomes of the Summit should benefit all, particularly women, youth, children and vulnerable groups.”<sup>8</sup> The *Political Declaration* committed delegates “to act together, united by a common determination

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<sup>7</sup> Andonova and Levy, ‘Franchising Global Governance’, p. 19.

<sup>8</sup> Brundtland, *Our Common Future*, p. 48; UN, *Plan of Implementation*, #3.

to save our planet, promote human development and achieve universal prosperity and peace.”<sup>9</sup> By framing the discourse in terms of cooperation, consensus and partnership the WSSD worked to marginalise the importance of democratic debate, dissent and conflict in determining which interests and values would be prioritised in implementing sustainable development. Indeed a voluntary approach which allows the market to determine partnerships for sustainable development seemingly undermines the need for multilateral summits in which policies are debated and decided. As such, the Johannesburg Summit was marked by an ebbing of faith in the necessity or importance of summitry as a political tool, and in 2004 the UN Cardoso Report pronounced that “the era of global conferences is largely over.”<sup>10</sup>

To assume, however, that summitry has little or no place in an era of partnerships and advanced liberal government is to underestimate how its role goes beyond merely formal negotiations on a text. Dismissing the WSSD as empty theatre or a meaningless ‘talkfest’ underestimates the importance of ritual, symbolic and performative dimensions of power.<sup>11</sup> It represents an important technique of advanced liberal government which performed sustainable development to a global audience, seeking to inspire broader changes in the conduct of conduct.

The discourse of summitry constructed the WSSD as a space ‘above’ normal politics, superior to and with a more extensive field of vision than that of day-to-day politics. Summit participants were constantly reminded that the eyes of the world were upon them, and they were urged to rise to the occasion. As such, successful communication strategies and public relations were as important for participants as diplomatic and technical knowledge. Summits provide a stage on which particular parts are performed and advertised, and those who flourished at the WSSD were those most skilled in managing and communicating their brand. The techniques of summit diplomacy were mobilised in order to produce the most convincing performance and to ensure consensus would be reached, rather than to ensure the optimum negotiated outcome. Disciplinary and sovereign techniques of power – for example in the accreditation and participation of non-state actors – ensured a smooth and consensual performance. Finally, particular characteristics were established as essential for political actors, namely inspirational leadership and consensual partnership. Whilst

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<sup>9</sup> UN, *The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development*, #35.

<sup>10</sup> Cardoso, *We the peoples*, p. 71; Death, ‘No WSSD+5?’

<sup>11</sup> Seyfang and Jordan, ‘The Johannesburg Summit and Sustainable Development’.



states have traditionally fulfilled the role of leaders at international summits, in Johannesburg they were also asked to play the role of partners as other actors were invited onto the stage in order to perform exemplary leadership. Through schemes like the Johannesburg Climate Legacy businesses were urged to take the lead and inspire broader action on sustainable development. Within the international community of states it was the South African hosts who used the theatre of the Summit to best effect to construct their national brand as the negotiating capital of the world and as the custodians of sustainable development.

As implicated within forms of advanced liberal government, summits have therefore become almost as important for their value as visible sites for the advertising and communication of particular brands and identities as they are for the negotiation of multilateral texts and outcomes. It is easy to write-off this dimension of politics as ‘spin’ and ‘greenwash’, yet to do so underestimates the importance of how summits manage the conduct of conduct through practices of rule at a distance. Rather than coercive or disciplinary power relationships, summits function through exemplary forms of power where norms are established and ‘proper’ standards of behaviour are communicated through the politics of inspiration and visibility. This interpretation of summitry draws its inspiration from Clifford Geertz who highlighted “the power of grandeur to organize the world.”<sup>12</sup>

The way in which summits function as sites of exemplary government within forms of advanced liberal rule is not one-sided however, since just as they can function in order to communicate responsible forms of conduct and exemplary leadership, they also provide a stage and visibility for protest and dissent. The conflicts and tensions within sustainable development politics are often neglected, and chapter five argued that an understanding of the WSSD requires an appreciation of how the protests in Johannesburg both subverted and reinforced forms of advanced liberal government.

These protests contested mainstream discourses of sustainable development by establishing their own fields of visibility, forms of knowledge, techniques and technologies, and identities. Protestors contested the Summit construction of a space ‘above politics’, instead arguing it represented the globalised reach of a particular set of Northern and capitalist interests. They drew attention to examples of unsustainable

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<sup>12</sup> Geertz, *Negara*, p. 102.

development and hypocrisy, yet also represented their own campaigns as *more global* and representative of the most marginalised sections of society. Whilst some protestors urged greater respect for scientific evidence in support of demands for action on climate change, for example, many others rejected the instrumental and economic logic which dominates mainstream sustainable development, instead turning to communicative rationalities of protest, display and carnival. Whilst some protestors demanded more interventionist government and tougher targets and multilateral agreements, many others chose to disrupt these technocratic mechanisms by marching on the streets. Rather than the consensual unity of the WSSD these protestors sought to represent politics as a struggle between good and evil, with the WSSD, global capital, the South African government and the UN representing an axis that must be resisted. The success of this construction was however always only limited and partial and many protestors continued to regard the ANC and the UN as potentially progressive forces and possible partners in sustainable development.

Rather than ‘pure resistance’ therefore, this thesis views the protests at the WSSD as Foucauldian “counter-conducts” which problematise and contest dominant forms of government, but also depend upon them and often reinforce existing modes of rule.<sup>13</sup> This was shown in the way a number of groups at the WSSD negotiated the boundary between resistance and cooperation flexibly, including Greenpeace, WESSA, Earthlife Africa and GroundWork. The exercise of their freedom to dissent, together with their engagement in debates over the proper standards of responsible corporate behaviour and sustainable partnerships, paradoxically confirmed the dominance of advanced liberal forms of government. In many ways their protests heightened the visibility of the Summit and sustainable development discourse. Rather than a complete rejection of government, these counter-conducts were calls to be governed differently, by different actors, and according to different values. Many of those protesting at the WSSD were in fact demanding to be *governed more*: in that they called for stronger targets, more binding regulations, and more interventionist state rule.

Yet for those who rejected the notions of partnership and consensus most vociferously and unambiguously, the reaction of the ANC and the South African State revealed the limits of advanced liberal forms of rule. The iron fist of the South

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<sup>13</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 201; and Foucault, ‘What is Critique’, p. 75.

African police and security forces fell upon organisations like the Landless People's Movement, the EJNF and the SMI, and their marginalisation by the ANC, international donors and the media have placed their continued political existence in doubt. The violence with which the South African State responded to the protests at the WSSD was alarming and rightly condemned. Yet, as Foucault observed, "those who resist or rebel against a form of power cannot merely be content to denounce violence or criticise an institution. Nor is it enough to cast the blame on reason in general. What has to be questioned is the form of rationality at stake."<sup>14</sup> The rationality of rule which produced this reaction was one in which the politics of sustainable development are envisaged in terms of the construction of consensus for the most efficient and effective implementation of sustainable development. Civil society, according to this rationality, is made up of those organisations who conduct themselves responsibly and cooperatively in the pursuit of sustainable development – "a united reconstruction and development brigade" as Mbeki phrased it – and have the technical expertise and managerial capacity to do so.<sup>15</sup> Those who are unable to act as partners in this enterprise are represented as peripheral to the politics of sustainable development, and those who are unwilling to engage cooperatively are excluded from responsible 'civil' society.

This thesis has avoided automatically valorising 'resistance' against 'power', or 'freedom' against 'government', since a Foucauldian governmentality perspective shows how tightly these concepts are interrelated and mutually dependent. As such we must refuse to pronounce the WSSD or sustainable development as 'good' or 'evil'. As Foucault made clear, "everything is dangerous ... the ethical political choice we have to make every day is to determine which is the main danger."<sup>16</sup> The argument made here is that the particular political rationality of partnership and consensus that predominated at the WSSD is dangerous because it acts as a form of de-politicisation, since it constructs conflict and dissent as peripheral to, and as a distraction from, the central business of implementing sustainable development. A Foucauldian ethos of politicisation argues that an awareness of the necessity of conflict and dissent are integral to democratic and progressive politics, since "politics is no more or less than that which is born with resistance to governmentality, the first

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<sup>14</sup> Foucault, 'Omnes et Singulatim', p. 324.

<sup>15</sup> Mbeki, 'The Masses are not Blind'.

<sup>16</sup> Foucault, 'Genealogy of Ethics', p. 256.

uprising, the first confrontation.”<sup>17</sup> Thus the protests at the WSSD worked to politicise sustainable development by challenging “established accounts of where and what politics must be.”<sup>18</sup> The streets of Johannesburg became political sites in 2002 just as much as the Sandton Convention Centre. Such an account follows Warren Magnusson’s discussion of ecological politics in Clayoquot Sound in putting “traditional distinctions between local and global, small and large, domestic and international – and much else – into serious question.”<sup>19</sup>

The original contribution of this research therefore lies in three principal areas. First, by approaching sustainable development from a Foucauldian governmentality perspective, the thesis argues that the WSSD marked the evolution of sustainable development discourse toward forms of advanced liberal government, encapsulated by the success of the Type II partnerships ahead of the Global Deal proposals. Secondly, it contributes the notion of exemplary governmentality to Foucauldian political theory, and shows how the theatre of the WSSD functioned as a translation mechanism for global power relations. Based on a rationality of inspiration and example, actors such as the South African government and the business community (though mechanisms like the Johannesburg Climate Legacy partnership) sought the conduct of conduct from the Summit stage. Thirdly, it argues that the protests at the WSSD are better understood as counter-conducts rather than ‘pure’ resistance. The concept of counter-conduct has the potential to advance often rather stale debates over whether resistance is revolutionary or reformist, and shows that protests can both undermine and reinforce different aspects of dominant power relations. How these counter-conducts are played out can also often have serious consequences for the actors involved, as was shown by the fortunes of the various protestors at the WSSD. The original contribution of this thesis is therefore both theoretical and empirical: it contributes to academic analyses of the WSSD as a historical event and the politics of sustainable development, as well as contributing to the literature on governmentality and Foucauldian political theory. As such it refuses to subscribe to a clear-cut separation between theory and practice. This is itself a key element of a Foucauldian ethos of continual criticism, politicisation and engagement with ‘real life’ issues and problems.

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<sup>17</sup> Foucault, unpublished manuscript dated 1979, quoted in M. Senellart, ‘Course Context’, in Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 390.

<sup>18</sup> Walker, ‘Social Movements/World Politics’, p. 678.

<sup>19</sup> W. Magnusson, ‘The Puzzle of the Political’, in Magnusson and Shaw (eds.), *A Political Space*, p. 1.

### *The Politics of Environment and Development*

The mutual interdependence of theory and practice mean it is possible to return to the questions of environment, development and global power relationships which motivated this research. This thesis set out to account for the role played by sustainable development within global politics, using the WSSD as a lens through which to examine the discourse. The conclusion it has reached is that sustainable development has become firmly implicated within forms of advanced liberal government, and is dominated by a neo-liberal discourse which prioritises voluntary partnerships and the ordering power of the market. Summits like the WSSD work as moments of exemplary government in which responsible businesses, NGOs and states communicate the proper conduct required for sustainable development to a global audience. Whilst resistance is possible at such moments – indeed it is inevitable and integral to the theatre of summitry – the most radical and confrontational protestors provoked sovereign and disciplinary forms of power which ensured their exclusion from the domain of legitimate politics.

This conclusion provokes us to ask whether and how a more radical, democratic and politicised form of sustainable development could be imagined and practiced. This is a question which has preoccupied recent debates over the “death of environmentalism” and the advent of “post-ecologism.”<sup>20</sup> In an influential and provocative essay, Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus argued that the US environmental movement has become a narrow special interest group focussed on technical policy proposals and has failed to engage with broader political debates over values and ideas. They argue that “environmentalists need to tap into the creative worlds of myth-making, even religion, not to better sell narrow and technical policy proposals but rather to figure out who we are and who we need to be.”<sup>21</sup> The debates sparked by their contribution have been heated, with critics noting that whilst their premise – the need to re-radicalise environmentalism – is valid, their proposal to replace legislation with public-private partnerships and technological innovation is

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<sup>20</sup> Wapner, ‘World Summit on Sustainable Development’; Shellenberger and Nordhaus, ‘The Death of Environmentalism’.

<sup>21</sup> Shellenberger and Nordhaus, ‘The Death of Environmentalism’, p. 34. See also T. Nordhaus and M. Shellenberger, *Break Through: From the Death of Environmentalism to the Politics of Possibility*, (Boston; Houghton Mifflin, 2007).

neither radical nor indeed political.<sup>22</sup> Indeed it echoes the partnership approach articulated at the WSSD.

Asking similar questions, but in a European context and reaching different answers, Yoram Levy and Marc Wissenburg have noted that the “successful integration of environmental movements, issues and ideas in mainstream politics raises the question whether there is a future for what was once a counter-movement and counter-ideology.”<sup>23</sup> Blühdorn and Welsh argue that we have entered “an era in which the historically radical and transformative elements of environmental movements and eco-political thought are blunted through mainstreaming and have been reconfigured by comprehensive cultural change.”<sup>24</sup> This taming of the radical and political impact of the environmental agenda is regarded by many as the central achievement of the sustainable development discourse, which at its extreme, “has become a convenient slogan to signal political correctness without the corresponding commitment to change.”<sup>25</sup> This thesis has shown how the WSSD furthered this trend, with the environmental agenda being re-fashioned in terms of poverty eradication (narrowly and economically conceived) and public-private partnerships. Compartmentalised approaches to environment and development threatened to re-emerge both within the official Summit negotiations and in tensions between greens, reds and browns in the civil society processes.

For Wapner, the lesson of the WSSD was that in trying to include the full scope of social justice and economic development issues that come with the terrain of sustainable development, “environmentalism might have too much on its plate right now.”<sup>26</sup> Whilst he accepts the necessity of working towards social justice, peace and democracy, he wonders whether the environmental movement might do better concentrating on what it has historically done best: “wasteful and unmindful affluence, inappropriate technology, accelerated population growth and worldviews that see nature as a realm separate from human life to be forever exploited in the name

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<sup>22</sup> Luke, ‘The Death of Environmentalism or the Advent of Public Ecology?’; J. M. Meyer, ‘Does Environmentalism have a future?’, *Dissent*, (Spring 2005), pp. 69 – 75; R. Paehlke, ‘Book Review: M Wissenburg and Y. Levy (eds.), “Liberal Democracy and Environmentalism”’, *Organization and Environment*, 18, 4, (2005), pp. 500 – 502.

<sup>23</sup> Y. Levy and M. Wissenburg, ‘Introduction’, in Wissenburg and Levy, *Liberal Democracy and Environmentalism*, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Blühdorn and Welsh, ‘Eco-Politics Beyond the Paradigm of Sustainability’, p. 185.

<sup>25</sup> Simon, ‘Development Revisited’, p. 28.

<sup>26</sup> Wapner, ‘World Summit on Sustainable Development’, p. 9.

of satisfying human desires.”<sup>27</sup> These are important questions for the tactics and strategy of environmental and sustainable development activists, although this thesis has not sought to answer them. What it has argued is that the partnerships approach has diluted the radicalism of the environmental agenda by detaching and subsuming it under mainstream economic and technological perspectives and *ad hoc* voluntary partnerships. In this respect one of the lessons drawn from the WSSD is not, as Wapner argues, that environmentalists should retreat onto safer ‘green’ territory, but rather that strengthening understanding of the links between environmental degradation and social and economic inequalities, and highlighting their shared causes, is one way of re-politicising sustainable development. Brundtland’s central insight, that “it is impossible to separate economic development issues from environmental issues”, and the environmental justice movement’s assertion that ‘the environment’ is ‘where we all live’, are politically challenging and worth defending.<sup>28</sup> Such holistic formulations are now standard within UN and academic discourses, yet have frequently failed to impact upon the actual structure or policies of national governments.<sup>29</sup> The politics of sustainable development needs re-politicising and re-radicalising, especially in terms of implementation, not a further segregation of demands for social justice and global democracy.

As such, a Foucauldian perspective on governmentality and counter-conduct warns against rejecting the politics of UN summitry and sustainable development in favour of a search for supposedly ‘purer’ forms of ecological resistance. As Foucault suggested, one should stand upright and face-to-face, “work with and be intransigent at the same time.”<sup>30</sup> This implies both engaging with and critiquing dominant discourses of sustainable development, corporate responsibility and partnership. Summits like the WSSD provide opportunities for theatrical politics at which neither states nor businesses; neither the UN nor civil society groups are entirely dominant. The WSSD ended with one particular balance between social, economic and environmental issues, but these can be re-contested and re-politicised. Exemplary

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

<sup>28</sup> Brundtland, *Our Common Future*, p. 3, and McDonald, ‘Introduction’, p. 2. See also Baker, ‘Sustainable Development as Symbolic Commitment’, p. 302.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Judy Beaumont, DEAT, (Pretoria, 29/09/2006); P. Chasek, ‘The Negotiating System of Environment and Development: A Ten-Year Review’, in Kalhauge *et al*, *Global Challenges*, p. 100; interview with Arend Hoogervorst, environmental consultant with Eagle Environmental, (Durban, 13/12/2006).

<sup>30</sup> Foucault, ‘So it is important to think?’, pp. 455 – 456.

forms of government may be used to foster political acquiescence and economic rationality, but they can also be used to encourage more socially just and ecologically sustainable forms of behaviour. The willingness of advanced liberal forms of government to tolerate dissent – within certain limits – is both its greatest strength and provides the opportunity for creative struggle against it. The limits which it establishes are not permanently fixed, and theatrical moments like the WSSD provide spaces in which these limits can be exposed, resisted and politicised.



## EPILOGUE

“Once upon a time the leopard who had been trying for a long time to catch the tortoise finally chanced upon him on a solitary road. *Aha*, he said; *at long last! Prepare to die*. And the tortoise said: *Can I ask one favour before you kill me?* The leopard saw no harm in that and agreed. *Give me a few moments to prepare my mind*, the tortoise said. Again the leopard saw no harm in that and granted it. But instead of standing still as the leopard had expected the tortoise went into strange action on the road, scratching with hands and feet and throwing sand furiously in all directions. *Why are you doing that?* asked the puzzled leopard. The tortoise replied: *Because even after I am dead I would want anyone passing by this spot to say, yes, a fellow and his match struggled here.*”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> C. Achebe, *Anthills of the Savannah*, (London; Heinemann, 1987), p. 128.

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# Appendix A

## Interviews

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Zehra Aydin, UN focal point for Major Groups, (New York, 15/10/2007).

Judy Beaumont, DEAT, (Pretoria, 29/09/2006).

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Ines Ceruti, Ceasefire and Earthlife Africa, (Johannesburg, 22/09/2006).

Pamela Chasek, Executive Editor Earth Negotiations Bulletin, (New York, 22/10/2007).

Patricia Chaves, Senior Sustainable Development Officer and Head of Partnerships Team in the Division for Sustainable Development, DESA, (New York, 16/10/2007).

Jacklyn Cock, Professor of Sociology, Wits University, (Johannesburg, 20/09/2006).

Des D'Sa, Chairman of the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, (Durban, 15/12/2006).

Saliem Fakir, director of IUCN-SA, (Email communication, 27/10/2006).

David Fig, academic and consultant, (Johannesburg, 19/09/2006).

Andre Fourie, CEO of the National Business Initiative, (Johannesburg, 24/10/2006).

Anique Greyling, Endangered Wildlife Trust, (Johannesburg, 06/09/2006).

Andy Gubb, WESSA-Western Cape, (Email communication, 18/09/2006).

Ralph Hamann, academic, (Johannesburg, 26/10/2006).

Samantha Hargreaves, Landless People's Movement, (Johannesburg, 27/10/2006).

Arend Hoogervorst, environmental consultant with Eagle Environmental, (Durban, 13/12/2006).

Nick King, CEO Endangered Wildlife Trust, (Johannesburg, 06/09/2006).

Muna Lakhani, Earthlife Africa and 'Zero Waste' co-ordinator, (Durban, 14/12/2006).

John Ledger, Endangered Wildlife Trust, (Johannesburg, 13/09/2006).

JP Louw, stakeholder relations in JOWSCO, (Midrand, 17/10/2006).

Teboho Mashota, APF Finance Administrator and SECC media liaison, (Johannesburg, 18/10/2006).

Masupha Mathenywa, Designated National Authority for the Clean Development Mechanism, (Johannesburg, 29/08/2006).

Dale McKinley, SMI Press Secretary, (Johannesburg, 23/10/2006).

Michael Meacher, UK Member of Parliament, (Telephone interview, 23/11/2007).

Mary Metcalfe, Gauteng Provincial Member of Executive Council for Agriculture, Conservation, Environment and Land Affairs, 1999 – 2004, (Johannesburg, 22/09/2006).

Mapitso Muambadzi, Community Education Facilitator with Pikitup waste management, (Johannesburg, 29/08/2006).

Victor Munnik, activist and author, (Johannesburg, 25/10/2006).

Alan Murphy, Ecopeace activist, (Durban, 06/12/2006).

Obert Ncube, 'Working for Water' programme, DWAF, (Johannesburg, 29/08/2006).

Trevor Ngwane, SECC and APF, (Soweto, 28/09/2006).

Bheki Ntshalintshali, Deputy General Secretary COSATU, (Johannesburg, 04/10/2006).

Chippy Olver, Director General of DEAT and chairman of JOWSCO, (Johannesburg, 05/10/2006).

Zarina Patel, academic and 'Greening the Summit' project manager at WSSD, (Johannesburg, 12/09/2006).

Rebecca Pearl, Women's Environment and Development Organisation, (New York, 22/10/2007).

Bobby Peek, Director of Groundwork, (Durban, 07/12/2006).

Mashile Phalame, Earthlife Africa, (Johannesburg, 18/09/2006).

Deborah Posel, Professor of Sociology, WISER, (Johannesburg, 25/10/2006).

Diane Quarless, Vice Chair and Rapporteur on the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee for the WSSD, and co-Chair of Partnership Initiatives, (New York, 17/10/2007).

Olivia Radebe, Environmental Projects Manager, Pikitup Waste Management, (Johannesburg, 04/09/2006).

Tumelo Ramolefi, self-employed environmental entrepreneur, (Johannesburg, 29/08/2006).

Chris van Rooyen, Eskom Powerlines Partnership, Endangered Wildlife Trust, (Johannesburg, 06/09/2006).

Richard Sherman, IISD, (Cape Town, 10/11/2006).

Kushmika Singh, student environmentalist, (Johannesburg, 01/09/2006).

Tonya Vaturi, Programme Associate for Major Groups, Division for Sustainable Development, DESA, (New York, 16/10/2007).

Ahmed Veriava, SMI and Freedom of Expression Institute, (Durban, 02/12/2006).

Alf Wills, Deputy-Director General of DEAT, (Pretoria, 26/09/2006).

Jessica Wilson, EMG, (Telephone interview, 11/12/2006).

Richard Worthington, Earthlife Africa, (Johannesburg, 31/10/2006).



# Appendix B

Image #1



Reproduced from Munnik and Wilson, *The World Comes to One Country*, p. 47.

Image #2



Reproduced from <http://www.un.org/events/wssd/> (11/09/2008).

Image #3



Reproduced from <http://www.deat.gov.za/> (11/09/2008).

Image #4



Reproduced from [http://www.marxist.com/Africa/wssd\\_repression.html](http://www.marxist.com/Africa/wssd_repression.html) (accessed 12/07/2007).



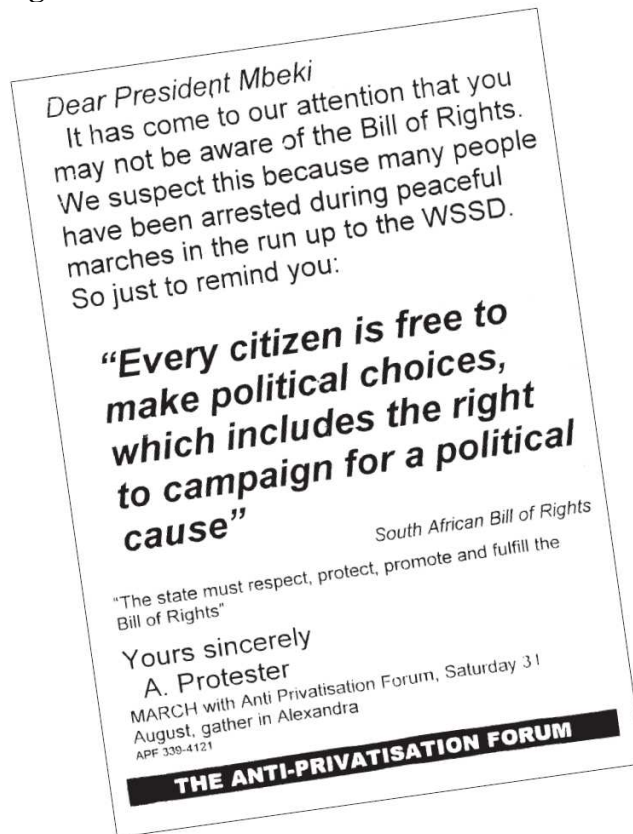
Reproduced from <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs/default.asp?3,28,10,1217> (11/09/2008).

**Image #5**



Reproduced from <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/photosvideos/photos/greenpeace-activists-from-five> (11/09/2008)

Image #6



Reproduced from Munnik and Wilson, *The World Comes to One Country*, p. 60.

Image #7



Reproduced from Munnik and Wilson, *The World Comes to One Country*, p. 30.